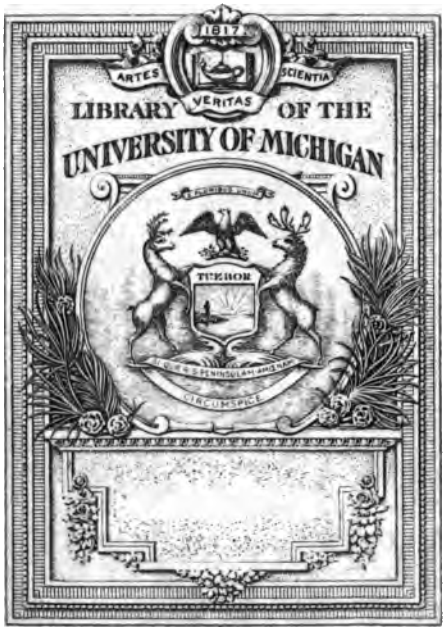
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ATTITUDES AND AVOWALS

WITH SOME RETROSPECTIVE REVIEWS

BY

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

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TO

GERTRUDE ATHERTON

WITH HOMAGE FOR THE
WRITER AND AFFECTION
FOR THE FRIEND

THE following papers have been published at various times in *The Fortnightly Review*, *The Academy*, *The Forum*, *Harper's Magazine*, *Success*, *The Smart Set*, *Ainslee's*, *The Cosmopolitan*, and *The New York Times*, to the several editors of which the writer desires to make his acknowledgments. The essay on George Meredith's *Modern Love* is reprinted from a private edition of that poem printed by Mr. Mitchell Kennerley.

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II

cards or a game of chess. Pleasure is an exceedingly personal matter, and other people's pleasures are among the deep mysteries of life; but thus much is sure,—there is no use in our offering them ours. One danger, therefore, which but slightly applies to other forms of therapeutics, the literary physician will need to be on his guard against,—the prescribing of a medicine because he happens to like it himself. He may have a private weakness for George Meredith or Walter Pater or Henry James, and be very much tempted to indulge himself by making a curative fad of such writers, as occasionally one finds an ordinary doctor making a habit of prescribing some fashionable drug under all possible and even impossible circumstances. No, the literary physician must sink his own personal predilections, and, if it seems likely that the patient will be benefited, say by doses of Marie Corelli, he must prescribe the distasteful mixture without flinching.

One may note here, as a side issue of the practice of literary medicine, what a new and lucrative field it will open up for the writer, inaugurating quite a new demand for his books, and, incidentally, a vast new area of advertisement. Books, then, in addition to their circulation merely as literature, will enjoy, also, the broadcast publication of patent medicines, and be advertised accordingly. In the publishers' columns, the press notices of a certain book will

contain not only the opinions of the literary critics, but the testimonials, also, of the highest medical authorities. The question asked of a new book then will be not merely how well it is written, but also for what complaint it is the latest remedy. Chronic invalids will scan the literary columns in hope of a new nostrum. Writers, too, who fall short somewhat of the high literary qualities may find consolation in this medical usefulness. Mr. So and So's style may with justice be described as atrocious, but then,—as a specific for lumbago and sciatica, he has no equal. "Try Mr. Smith's great liver novel!"—"Can't you sleep at night? —Read Mr. Piper's new poems: highly recommended by the faculty; at all drug stores!"—"The ingredients of Mrs. Truelove's great rheumatism romance analysed by the Society of Analytical Chemists," and so on. Such are the advertisements we may expect to see, when the medical efficacy of literature has come to be recognised and the new school of literary therapeutics which I have foreshadowed is an accomplished fact.

To return, for a final word, to the more serious side of the subject,—there will, at all events, be one branch of the healing science in which literary therapeutics will surpass all others,—the art of alleviating what it cannot cure. For those sad ones who may never hope to be cured in this world the

ordinary doctor can be of little avail. His medicines can bring neither peace nor patience, nor has he the secret of any balm or nepenthe for such enduring affliction. But here the literary pharmacopœia is rich, indeed, and the books of courage and consolation and good cheer are, perhaps, more numerous than any others, so invincible is the instinctive faith and hope in the heart of man; and, while the literary physician no more than any other can ward off that last initiatory sickness of our dissolution, he can at least do more than any other to sweeten its bitterness and to prepare the soul to meet the great physician, Death, with a firm heart and calm eyes.

X

ON THE LOVABLENESS OF LORDS

An Englishman dearly loves a lord.—OLD PROVERB.

PUBLIC opinion delights to exercise itself on few subjects more enthusiastically than on the marriages between European noblemen and American heiresses. Its superficial disapproval of these matches is passionate, indeed almost hysterical, with interest—almost as hysterical as the mad rush of the female *bourgeoisie* to the spectacle of their bridals. Both parties to the contract—or "deal," as it is sometimes unkindly called—are condemned in turn. The nobleman is obviously marrying the heiress for her money; the heiress is obviously marrying the nobleman for his title. One is an "adventurer," the other is a snob. In these strictures it is never for a moment surmised that, in addition to the supposedly purchasable commodities on either side, the two young people may be genuinely in love as well; or that the lord, for his part, is a charming fellow and a true gentleman, whom even a woman not an heiress

might well love; and that the heiress, for her part, is so beautiful, and so truly a lady, that though she walked in rags instead of million dollar bills, any king upon his throne would gladly play the part of King Cophetua.

Such considerations as these are entirely ignored by that impertinent censorship of public opinion. Also, no one ever takes the trouble to ask how these marriages turn out, whether or no they have satisfied "the high contracting" parties, and that something more than title or money has indeed changed hands; whether, indeed, this marriage made in Wall Street has not proved itself to have been made in heaven as well.

My acquaintance with the society of the great world is far too limited for me to attempt an answer to the last speculation, though in my humble capacity as a democratic reader of the newspapers—with your true democrat's interest in the life of his superiors—I have not observed that these international marriages have failed—at all events, publicly. Of course, one never knows; but cases of acute matrimonial failure are apt to become public property in these days, particularly when the incompatibles are conspicuous by money or by birth. Indeed, if one may judge by the absence of cabled scandal, the lord has usually proved himself worth the money, and the American heiress worn the "title" with

as true a distinction as any lady born into Burke or Debrett.

But even let us suppose that in some cases the simple human happiness of married love has been missed, or even that it was never conceived on either side as part of the promised "consideration"; that both parties joined hands on their bargain with, as we say, their eyes open—who shall say that the bargain was a bad one, or that neither had the right to make it? It is not everyone that seeks merely an amorous happiness in marriage. It is only the very wise and simple that marry for home and children. There are other ways of being happy, and it may well be that a marriage may be entirely "happy"—that is, satisfactory alike to husband and wife—without love entering into it. Many beautiful women are born whose instincts are rather social than maternal, whose happiness lies in the gratification of social and personal ambition. To this end they may lack but one condition—the *entrée* into those spheres where only such glory is to be won. They have beauty, they have manners—but their father is a pork-packer. His tastes—bless him!—are simple as his pursuits. He is the rough quarry out of which his daughter's beauty—and diamonds—were dug. Socially speaking, he has but one advantage, and the advantage is tremendous—at all events, for his daughter. He

is self-made, it is true; but, then, he is made of money. There is nothing—good heart as he usually is!—that he will not buy to make his daughter happy. The daughter whispers, "A title."

Now, to the eye of superficial democratic criticism, "a title" may seem a poor thing in exchange for a few million dollars—a mere Old World spangle that would be a poor exchange, in fact, for a five-cent piece. Of course, there are odds in titles. Some would be scarcely worth stealing. But, generally speaking, a title is the most valuable of all natural gifts—for obviously it is a natural gift; and [illegible], by way of illustration, that "gifts" are always cited upon as the most valuable of human commodities. M. Paderewski was born with a gift—so was Mr. Kipling, so was Lord Rosebery. Lord Rosebery has other gifts, but his chief natural gift was "a title," for it was his title that set his other gifts upon a hill they might not have climbed of themselves. "A title!" exclaims some indignant democrat. "What value is there in that?" Well, precisely the value attaching to a piece of money, the value set upon it by society—yes, one might almost say of humanity. "Snobs and fools!" your indignant democrat may fume. Yes; but, then, however wrong humanity may be in its standards, there is little use in denying that anything upon which it sets the stamp of value is—humanly

speaking—valuable, and becomes a fact to be counted with, however reluctantly. Therefore, on the ground of general acceptance alone, "a title" is one of the most valuable of human assets.

If you have a title, you need little else. Unless you are quite impossible, all other things will be added unto you. Merely, then, on its face value, a title is at least the equal, financially speaking, of a million-dollar bill, for precisely the same reason —because both title and dollar bill are symbols to which the world has agreed to attach an exceedingly high value. Mr. Bryan would call the value more or less fictitious in both cases, and Mr. Bryan's opinion is a valuable fact, too—with no little financial value, even yet. If only he can remould us nearer to his heart's desire, the value both of lords and of gold will considerably decrease. For the present, however, we live under an aristocratic gold standard, and to have been born with a title, as I said, is as good as having been born with a million-dollar bill in your mouth—"payable," of course, "in gold."

But I must not be misunderstood as thinking that an American girl marries a lord merely from snobbish superstition. On the contrary, I desire to vindicate her preference for European nobility on higher and more essential grounds. In fact, it is not so much the lord she loves as Europe—Europe, with its romance, its distinction, its art of living. She may

be, and I fancy usually is, decorously impatient of the family nonentities with whom her marriage necessitates insincere contact. Even marriage into the worst families necessitates that kind of forbearance. She has no superstition about a dreary dowager, or some drunken cad of a high-born brother-in-law. Not all the dollars in the world can quite buy us immunity from the family bore. Yet think what else this so-called purchase of "a title" has brought her! She had, indeed, a wonderful home in Illinois. Its taste was perfect, its beauty was delicately magnificent. One might even say that for sheer intrinsic beauty and refinement it surpassed her new home in Buckinghamshire. But, then, it was only ten years old—and it was in Illinois. People who cannot for the life of them see why a great pianist is better worth listening to than a pianola will be at a loss to understand her taste—and her old father, perhaps, in particular. But, then, you see, while he has been at work in the stockyards she has been worshipping in Rome, in Nuremberg, in Stratford-on-Avon, in Bayreuth. She had learned there that there are two qualities in the world mysteriously valuable—Antiquity and Style; and that they go inseparably together. It is that fatal education her poor, rich father has worked so hard to provide that has made her love a lord—that is, made her love these old stones, these old

oaks, and these galleries filled with dreamlike faces. Just walk with her into the old Italian garden, with its fragrance of antique flowers, its high-clipped hedges, its fish ponds of monastic carp, its pagan images here and there in unvisited shrubberies, the very bricks of the old walls like missals illuminated with the religion of time—and then remember those gardens that were indeed beautiful as skill and taste and money could make them far away in Illinois. There was only one presence you missed in that Illinois garden—the mysteriously beautiful presence of Time. For, even in Illinois, Time is a gardener no money can buy, a subtle yet simple architect, too deliberate in his lazy sententious skill to hurry himself for the highest wage.

And the charm she finds in her old Buckinghamshire garden is symbolic of all that her marriage with "a title" brings her. Please remember, dear reader, that I am not in the least depreciating the value—indeed, in my poor opinion, the higher value—of that so-called "simple" happiness which neither riches nor titles can buy. I sincerely believe in love in a cottage—for some people, and those often the wisest and the best. I believe, too, in all simple unpurchasable happiness. Indeed, what else is there to believe in? Money, we have been truthfully told, cannot buy the things best worth buying. It cannot buy, for instance, the goodness of women,

though it can nearly always buy their beauty. It cannot buy you beautiful children, it cannot buy you brains; but it can buy you a beautiful woman, a beautiful country house, a beautiful yacht, beautiful horses, and, perhaps best of all, a beautiful automobile. And, to return to our first thought, it can buy you antiquity and distinction. It can buy you an atmosphere to breathe in, aromatic with fragrance of immemorial refinement. It can buy you rooms to live in still exquisite with the breath of beautiful ladies of old time; rooms still echoing with the tread of strong men plotting the terrible beauty of history; rooms still lovely as starlight with the solitary aspirations of dead poets and scholars; and ancient oratories sweet as cinnamon with the prayers of a thousand years. A new country obviously cannot give you these things. If you should say that it can give you something far more important, surely I should not dispute the point—for values are so relative, and a dead language, so-called, has admonished us upon the futility of disputations on matters of taste. There are some by no means tasteless persons whom that air of antiquity affects like the heavy, noxious vapours of decay. To live in an old house or an old city is to them like living in a tomb perfumed with the spices of the embalmers. The beauty, say, of Venice is to them beauty, indeed; but it is the beauty of a marvellous

sepulchre. They love to live in young cities, much as some love to live with young people, for the sense of vital freshness in the air, the brave adventurous winds blowing up out of the future—not those poisonous exhalations of the past. In New York and Chicago they seem to see the strong young cities of the future rising as to the trumpets of the dawn. About such cities of the new world a wind of spring is blowing. The sound of the hammers on the huge towers soaring in every street is like the singing of birds. The air is brisk and busy with youth, and jubilant with its martial strength. Here is no thought of death. Even the cemeteries are young, and the gravestones flash in the morning sun with newly gilded names.

Yet—strange how different nature has made us!—for others this very impetus of rejuvenescence felt, as we have been saying, by some in the smell of mortar freshly laid, is only to be had in those old dead cities made of memories and sighs. In their very antiquity there is for them a veritable potency of youth. They have, I suppose, the historic sense, and are sensitive to the energising continuity of history. These old houses and cities do not so much speak to them of mortality as of immortality. These dusty names are not dusty for them; they still glitter with the youth of immortal achievement, and their stories are potent with the elixir of emula-

tion. For such, antiquity is not merely dreamy with meditation, but dynamic with ambition.

But perhaps you are thinking that all this in regard to the marriage of American ladies with English lords is to consider too curiously. Seriously speaking, I think not. Of course, you may occasionally find an American girl of wealth who marries a lord from *bourgeois* motives; but anyone who would maintain that the American girl of the best type marries from sheer snobbery knows, I venture to say, little about her—and also forgets one important fact curiously forgotten by critics of these international nuptials. The fact I refer to is that the American girl's "blood" is often just as "good" as, and occasionally better than, her titled husband's. It has often struck me as strange that the world should so seldom remember that America was settled by some of the very best blood from the Old World, and that the best American pedigrees go back as far as any in Europe, for the simple reason that their roots are there. Indeed, it has been that principle of aristocratic command in the blood that has prevailed to drill and order the mass of pestilential chaos that has been, and to some extent still is, the raw material of modern America. With all due respect to it, America is still of necessity a factory, "a sounding labour house vast of being." It is still the untamed wilderness of industrialism,

which the strong men are engaged in subduing with the sweat of their brows. They are so hard at work with their axes, so to speak, that they have no time for the elegancies of ancestry. But their beautiful women have—and can you blame them if, amid the shriek of sawmills and the fume of the stockyards, a homesickness comes over them for those lands across the sea, the dream of which stirs in them, as the dream of Italy stirs in the Californian vine—a homesickness for a world more suited to beautiful women; no mere frontier world of progress, no mere world in the making, but a world all exquisitely made, a world that has time to think of flowers—and is such an engine room as America the congenial home for such a flower as the American girl?

Europe, on the other hand—well, it has time for flowers. It is by no means without its engine houses, but they are so well established that they go no little of themselves, and leave those in charge of them leisure to cultivate their gardens and to think a little of their souls—and a lot of their pleasures. A lord is a man whom nature has intrusted with the task of being a gentleman—that is, of being the noblest work of God. I do not, of course, say that it is necessary to be a lord to be a gentleman—though surely no man can be a lord who is not a gentleman. *Noblesse oblige.* What I mean is that a lord is a man born with the necessity of

being nothing else but a gentleman; a man who should, and, if only by sheer force of tradition, usually does, stand for the chivalrous virtues and finer arts of life. The cultivation of these needs leisure. Leisure is only to be bought by money. Money is only to be had in America. So it comes about that English lords marry American ladies. Personally, I believe that they would marry them, though they were penniless. I know that I would. But, then, alas! I was not born a lord.

XI

THE WORLD AND THE LOVER

THE whole world is proverbially said to love a lover. Like most proverbial statements, this one is exceedingly open to question. In fact, all the evidence seems flatly the other way. On what data, one wonders, did the old proverb-maker base his dictum? Surely not on the great love-stories. The world, with its appetite for vicarious excitement, likes well enough to watch the tragic spectacle of a great passion. Incapable of great feelings itself, it thrills to the drama of them in others. It even applauds their lawlessness, and canonises their audacity. All the same, it will not raise a finger to help while the story is in the making; but, on the contrary, does everything in its power to persecute and impede. The moment Romeo and Juliet are safely dead in each other's arms, the world is voluble with its sympathy—but not till it is quite sure that its sympathy can be of no possible service to the lovers. While sympathy would be of some use, the world—which is the embodied cowardice and cant of humanity—stands firm with Montague and Capulet, seniors. If the lovers win, well and good. No one has ever denied

that the world loves success—though it has always consistently done its worst to prevent it. Yes, the world loves successful love, as it fawns on anything that has conquered it. It loves also pity that costs it nothing. But that it loves a lover, for love of love, is simply not true. If it were true, there would probably have been no love-stories, for the drama of love has mostly come of the conflict between the lovers and the world. They had to count the world well lost to win each other. It was so in the days of Tristan and Isolde, and so it still is in the days of Rudolph of Bavaria.

What the world, however, does thoroughly appreciate is the exhibition of love in difficulties—love in the ribald searchlight of the divorce court, love shipwrecked, love running the gantlet of persecution, love befooled and betrayed and despoiled of its dream. There is something well pleasing to the cynicism of the world in all this, for love in its very nature, in its contemptuous idealism, is a reproach, and therefore an offence, against the complacent materialism of the world; and, naturally, the world rejoices to see its lofty pretensions in the dust. For love has indeed a high-handed way with it, an aristocratic insolence of bearing toward the plebeianism of use-and-wont, and the world is ever on the watch to pay it out for its transcendental airs. As the course of true love never did run

smooth, the world is assured of perennial entertainment. It would, indeed, seem to be in love's very nature to be always in difficulties; for, as Hafiz complains:

> . . . this strange love which seemed at first, alas!
> So simple and so innocent a thing,
> How difficult, how difficult it is!

Poor love! It certainly has enough troubles of its own making to contend with, without the world besetting its path with external obstacles. It seems born to sorrow as the sparks fly upward. There is always something the matter, and the love that might be perfect seldom gets its chance.

Not only the world, but life itself seems to take a mysterious delight in making things as hard as possible for this gentle passion, that means so kindly and asks only to be left in peace. There would almost seem, for example, to be studied malignity of design, rather than mere accident, in the way life carefully arranges that lovers should always meet too late for happiness. With pure devilishness, Life would seem to say: "Here are two people absolutely made for each other. They have but to meet at the right moment, under favouring conditions, to be completely and enduringly happy. Therefore, I will hide them from each other, till such time as they have become hopelessly involved

in the lives of others entirely unsuited for them, and then, when they are irrevocably pledged to a disastrous destiny, I will bring about their meeting, and watch the agonised drama that results." This is the formula from which life seldom deviates, and it never seems to weary of the sardonic tragicomedy of two lovers thus trying to disentangle themselves from the web of circumstance.

This syncopation, which prevails elsewhere and everywhere in the stories of lovers, seems the more designed because life, when it wishes, is seen to calculate its times and seasons with such precision, and bring about other meetings and matings with such inspired promptitude. Consider the exquisite punctuality of the heavenly bodies. The conjunctions of the planets are timed to the fraction of a second, and, after journeyings a century long, they come gliding in their appalling orbits straight to the sidereal rendezvous. And elsewhere in nature we see the same careful ordering of dependent correspondences. The bee is not abroad before the coming of the flowers, nor is the butterfly sent forth to meet the snow; neither is the tiniest nursling of the earth awakened into life, before nature has prepared for its appointed welcome. In all her other pairings nature is seen to be anxiously exact —only with man and woman, it would seem, is she so mysteriously perverse.

And this bitter wrong which Life thus does to Love is one which even Life itself is powerless to right. Sometimes, with ironic kindness, Life will seem to offer Love a late opportunity of correcting that old mistake. Some years after their first hopeless meeting she will make the way apparently smooth for them; loose them, by change and chance, from those dividing bonds, and say, "Now, take each other." But alas! it is too late. They are no longer the same people. The years have had their way with them. They are to each other but sacred memories, ghosts of Might-have-been.

> No diver brings up love again,
> Dropped once, my beautiful Fèlise,
> In such cold seas.

One perhaps hardly realises the important part played in these heart-tragedies by—the moment, the moment that can never come again. We are apt to assume that, so long as the two chief actors remain alive, it is in their power, under favouring circumstances, to take up their lives together at the point where they parted. But, so soon as they attempt to do this, it is borne tragically in upon them that there was a third actor equally important with themselves present at the time of their first fateful meeting and choosing of each other, an actor impossible to recall or to substitute. That actor was—the moment. Or, to change the simile, the moment

was like that perilously sensitive harmony of conditions which the old alchemists called the moment of projection, the moment when the elements in the crucible are tremulously eager to combine, when every influence has been adjusted with unerring calculation, when the planets are shining in that magical aspect for which the alchemist may watch in vain all the rest of his life, the tense moment before the diverse elements leap into union and turn to—gold.

So it was, almost exactly, with our two lovers. Had the moment been allowed to have its way with them, they would have become one indivisible happiness, growing more perfectly in harmony with the passage of time, subject to the same influences and undergoing the same changes so subtly together as to appear unchanged. But the moment of union gone by, left separate in the world, two divided entities individually subject to different influences—though their love, say, of year 1900 may remain alive, they find, on meeting again in 1906, that that love is somehow not in harmony with their changed and developed selves. It needs, so to say, to be brought up to date, and they realise, with sad hearts, that that cannot be done. The two people who loved each other in 1900 have passed into dreamland. There they still love each other. But the two people who bear their names, and still

look like them in 1906, are not the same, and can never be the same again. It is just possible that their up-to-date embodiments may fall in love on their own account, on a 1906 basis, but I doubt if this has ever happened. No "gone is gone——"

> Look in my face; my name is Might-have-been;
> I am also called No-more, Too-late, Farewell.

Though, as we have remarked, the world, so strangely said to love a lover, does everything in its power to make the course of true love run as rough as possible, it is the severest critic of any attempt on the part of love to make it smooth. Let two unhappy people attempt to remould the "sorry scheme" of their matrimonial purgatory "nearer to the heart's desire," and the world is at once after them with its censorious hypocrisy. It was, more than likely, the world's fault to start with, but that makes no difference. The situation, too, is probably one of delicate complexity, the rights and wrongs of it so equally divided and so inextricably tangled, and the whole dilemma so intimately personal to the two involved, that it is impossible for a third person to get at the evidence, not to speak of passing judgment. The world, however, takes no account of such nice considerations, but, with ignorant impudence, presumes to decide and condemn. As the world is too coarsely organised to

know anything about the finer manifestations of the mystery that is love, it is necessarily insensitive to any of its more refined difficulties. The divorce-court differences of those who love crudely it can understand, but the painful spiritual incompatibilities of finer natures are so much Greek to it. For the loves of butchers and book-makers it is a competent tribunal, but the love difficulties of more highly organised individuals are not to be solved by the meat-axe of the law.

The pity of it is that the very fineness of such natures increases their suffering and further complicates complexity. For simple violent natures there are remedies equally simple and violent, Love, maybe, has turned to hate, according to the ancient melodramatic formula, and there the issue is simple, and the trouble soon disposed of. But, with the finer natures, love's difficulties are seldom so clean-cut as that. Two who have once loved may be aware that their love is dead, yet so much old kindness survives that they shrink from hurting each other, will indeed suffer keenly in secret rather than betray the lonely truth. One does not envy the nature that can coldly say to another in whom love is still alive: "My love is dead"; and yet there will be many to argue that this executioner's way is best. To others it will seem too much like plain murder. Better surely to suffer the pains of hell

in silence than thus to smite with clenched fist the appealing face of love. Even though, sooner or later, the truth must out, surely it is the better way to mitigate its revelation all we can. In this matter, however, woman is permitted to be more summary than man; and the reason is, perhaps, not far to seek. Consider the airy way in which a woman will break off an engagement, with little more concern than if she were dismissing a servant. But a man must keep his, though he may have come to see with clear eyes that to do so means certain unhappiness on both sides.

Has it not happened to many a man to drift into an engagement with some charming girl, who, he is obscurely conscious, in spite of his genuine affection for her, is not somehow the wife he had been expecting some day to marry? He is dimly aware of a misgiving at the bottom of his heart that she is not the wife life has chosen for him. Life whispers him to "wait," giving him one of those warnings which at important moments Life often does give us through our instincts, but which too often we allow our reason to overrule. "Wait," Life keeps saying, "your woman of destiny is already on her way towards you. At any moment she may turn the corner of the street, and you may meet her face to face. Wait, O wait!" But he pays no heed to the warning, and, suddenly, when he is inexorably

pledged, perhaps but a short week before his marriage day—the dream-woman turns the corner of the street! And it is too late.

Had the cases been reversed, his betrothed, without a moment's hesitation, would have dismissed him into outer darkness with half-a-sheet of note-paper, and left him to get over it as best he could. But he, being a man, must act a man's part, and, unknown to her, lay as a sacrifice upon the altar of their wedding the whole joy and meaning of his life. Or, if he conceives it his duty to tell her of his changed feeling, she will probably break down so piteously, with hints at suicide, that he feels himself an utter scoundrel; tenderness wells up in him, perilously like love, and the marriage takes place, after all.

It may happen that such a marriage proves successful, but the probability is that, human nature, even with the best intentions, remaining human nature, it will sooner or later come to grief. In spite of faithful efforts to lay it, the ghost of that old dream will haunt the heart of the man, and will some day glide, visible to both, between the unhappy husband and wife. Nor will the apparition long remain invisible to the sharp eyes of the world.

Then shall the man hear how thankless a thing it is that he has tried to do. If, in extenuation of

his failure to make happy the woman he did not love, it be urged that he has sacrificed the woman he did love and his own heart in the unsuccessful attempt, he will learn that he did a cruel wrong to his wife to marry her under such circumstances, that the manly thing for him to have done was to have broken his engagement! Probably someone will quote:

> For each man kills the thing he loves,
> By each let this be heard,
> Some do it with a bitter jest,
> Some with a flattering word;
> The coward does it with a kiss,
> The brave man with a sword.

Yet, had he used the sword, who needs be told what would have been said of him then? He was placed in one of the cruellest dilemmas which a man can be called to face. Sacrificing his own joy, he has honestly done his best. But the world, which is incapable even of conceiving the sacrifice he made, regards only his failure in a noble struggle, and condemns him accordingly.

Love's tragedies are usually three-cornered, and no less often it is the woman, who, by the force of those circumstances which press so peculiarly hard on women, has drifted into a loveless marriage, to meet too late "the love which moves the sun and stars." No one needs be told how much sympathy

she may expect from the world in her cruel situation; for the world, that likes nothing so well as to oppress the weak and to kill its wounded, is strangely pitiless to an unhappy woman who would fain be happy. For a woman that remoulding nearer to the heart's desire is a desperate step indeed.

There is one important truth about love which love's critics never seem to take into account—the fact that love is an irresistible natural force, and that falling in love is not a matter of the volition. The coming of a great love is as unforeseen and as unescapable as the day of one's death. The world treats falling in love as though it were a wilful self-indulgence, whereas the victims of that "lord of terrible aspect" know too well how helpless they are in the throes of a passion that fell upon them with supernatural suddenness, like lightning out of a clear sky.

There is always a strange terror mingled with the joy of love's coming, and those who know love best, rather than seek it, would often, like the hero of Tennyson's "Maud," flee from its cruel madness. For love seldom comes without bringing sorrow to someone: "Alas!" as an old dramatist says, "that nothing can win dear love but loss of dear love." One man must lose the face another wins; one woman's heart break that another's may be in heaven. And in this for all gentle hearts that

love there is great sorrow, and they would often willingly give up their own happiness rather than that another should suffer for their sake. But alas! it is of no avail. Tenderness we can command, but love is not in our power to feign; and, though pity be akin to love, who would accept it in exchange? It is such finer difficulties of love of which the world knows nothing, and, indeed, the love that the world does understand needs some other name.

The whole world loves a lover! On the contrary, the world and love are natural enemies, and the kingdom of love is not here.

XII

ON AIRSHIPS AND THE SOUL OF MAN

THE world is now confidently looking forward to the imminent era of the airship, with the eager impatience of a child for its new toy. The toy is almost ready. That it is coming there is now, obviously, no doubt at all. A few more experiments, a few more improvements, and it will be there on sale in the toy shop for anybody to buy, like the latest pattern of automobile.

How wonderful it will be to fly! No doubt it will be a very exciting, even an inspiring, and possibly an exquisite, experience. Such purely liquid speed will undoubtedly be a new form of ecstasy. It will come very near to disembodied motion—this jarless, subtle gliding through space, this silken rapidity of ethereal passage. Moreover, as an observation car of boundless prospects, the airship will provide the Cook's tourist of the sky with many novel gasps and thrills.

But it is not my purpose here to dilate on what the airship will bring us—to my thinking, comparatively little. That has long been in able and

enthusiastic hands; mine the solitary purpose vainly to point out and fruitlessly to lament what it must all too surely take away.

Certain other philosophers have their apprehensions. They dread its military developments; they foresee its criminal adaptability. But, so far as I have seen, no one seems to have realised, or, at all events, minded, that the airship means not the gain, but the irretrievable loss of the sky—the trivial physical conquest, indeed, but the tragical spiritual loss!

In the few years that remain before aviation is an accomplished commonplace of our lives, man is literally looking his last on the sky. All too soon it will be impossible, even for a rich man, to enjoy the peace which is mine this afternoon, as in the heart of an old wood I lie upon the fern and contemplate the mystery of the boundless sky. Soon that flawless Infinite will be feverishly alive to ear and eye with all the temporal traffic of the world, all the turmoil and vulgarity of any other earthly thoroughfare. Solitude will be utterly and forever destroyed, and wearied town-tired folk, that had been wont to flee into the country to rest their eyes and feed their nerves on tranquil spaces, may as well remain in the city, and will least of all turn their eyes on the sky, which will then be as suggestive of peace as Broadway at noontide.

There have been many outcries, from Ruskin on, against the vandalism of modern machinery. Such have seemed to me mainly sentimental, for the damage done to nature here and there by railway or power-house has been purely local or infinitesimal, by comparison with its boundless beauty. If here or there a railroad mars the landscape or a power house depletes a waterfall, the world is inexhaustibly supplied with landscapes and picturesque rivers.

All such forms of mechanical speed are lost to sight and sound in the great tree-clad silence of the earth. Even the vulgarest automobile party, breaking the country stillness, makes but a momentary intrusion and is gone with a turn in the road. The ugliest line of freight cars is swallowed up in some umbrageous woodland. All such vehicular necessities—and nuisances—make but comparatively insignificant currents and ripples upon the face of nature; but from the airship, it is easy to see, there will be no possibility of escape, no cessation of its visible intrusion everywhere and at all times on the tormented eyesight of man.

It will strike the greatest blow to beauty, in the deepest as well as the surface meaning of the word, that has ever been struck on this planet. The persecutions of beauty have been many, in their nature, but they have been spasmodic, passing historic manifestations of vandalism or eclipses of

the human spirit; but here is a hostile new condition of things, organic in nature itself, literally as all-embracing as the sky, from which there is no escape.

This is not a jeremiad merely in the interest of artists or poetical persons, yet it would be idle to deny what a calamity the airship will be to the painter. No one will ever be able to paint again the solemn glory of the sunset or the enchanted loneliness of the morning sky. Athwart the delicate heavens will come a grimy train of Standard Oil freight ships, or some noisy supper party will go by, blowing horns and singing music-hall ditties. Indeed, pictures of the sky before the day of airships will become rare and curious things, to be looked on with wonder, and enterprising painters might do worse than lay in a stock of pictures against the evil day. They will surely be of great value in the course of a very few years.

Of course, it is easy to see that the airship will have its own pictorial possibilities, too ; possibilities which no doubt will result in some delightfully bizarre art, as the barges and warehouses of the Thames turned to favour and to prettiness under the magic of Whistler; but such whimsical sectional art will hardly compensate us for the loss of the more central cosmic art of the sky, hardly console us for the loss of the silver mystery of the rising moon.

No, night and day, the sky will be a sky no longer,

but one vast and vulgar sky sign, which, instead of calming, will reflect and immeasurably increase the fever and fret of humanity.

All outdoor privacy will cease; for the most secluded woodland, the most untrodden wilderness, will be open to invasion at any moment. Gardens will lose half their charm. We shall have to roof them in. Noble parks will cease to be desirable possessions. Mountains will be the least solitary of all places—and in those days, indeed, no one will dream of going up into a mountain to pray. For all such meditative purposes man will have to descend into the bowels of the earth; and fantastic excavation—life *à la* Monte Cristo—will, no doubt, become the fashion for rich persons. Underground pleasure gardens, after the manner of the Arabian Nights, will be one of the refuges of persecuted man. For we shall all be at the mercy of the vulgar hoodlumism of the world to an extent we can hardly conceive of now. At present we can escape from the vulgar impertinent or the moneyed roisterer, but then there will be no refuge—except indoors or underground. The spectacle of vulgar wealth in all its vociferous parade will be ever before us, and money will become literally the prince of the powers of the air.

Whatever gains there may be to man in aviation—and the gains are obvious; I have already hinted at

them—they cannot, it seems to me, compensate him for the tragic, irretrievable, spiritual loss which will ensue from his achievement at last of the old disastrous ambition of Icarus.

The airship will give us greater rapidity of transportation, greater facilities for diabolic warfare, and a new speed excitement for nerves that live on speed. Undeniably it will be a wonderful new exhilaration—for a short while—to a jaded, feverish world. But when the novelty has died down, and to circle round the Flatiron Building is no longer more exciting than spinning a top or rolling a hoop, I think that man, with a great and vain regret, will awaken to what he has lost by his wonderful new toy.

All the old peace and prayer of the world will have gone. The air, once so pure and tranquil, will be filled with the sound of gongs, the flash of signals and undreamed-of forms of noise and colour. Man will have placed a cloud of gigantic gnats between him and the Infinite; and, howsoever high he may ascend in the swiftest airship, never will he find again the same sky that blessed him with its blue peace, its beautiful old dreams of better worlds and fantastic fairy isles and seas, and laid the consoling hand of the Eternal upon his troubled human heart. For him the moon no more shall rise among the quiet trees, and the morning star will be sur-

rounded by—excursionists. All such ancient inspirations and consolations of man will be gone. Where now will be the sweet influences of the Pleiades? And no more even may he lie down in the green pastures or walk beside the still waters. He will have lost both heaven and earth. He will, so to speak, have come astronomically nearer to the stars —as though he had been pushed up a little nearer, through a telescope—but astronomy is not the stars. He will have become acquainted with awful azure gulfs of space, millions of miles of nothing, with dizzy heights of boundless, but somewhat similar, ether; but he will have lost what I might call a certain old familiarity betwixt sky and earth, which makes the sun seem nearer and closer to us, as it opens the eyes of the flowers, and sets the birds singing, and fills the woodland with ascending spices, and tans us in long, happy, summer days, and then sets, with such mysterious promise of immortal glory to mortal hearts, behind the widowed world.

The naked sun and the naked moon are tiresome heavenly bodies. They owe their real attraction for us to the earth, which clothes their beams in various raiment of morning mist and romantic cloud—the pomp and luxury and tenderness of clouds; the airy veils of rainbowed vapours. Or they must alternately hide and reveal and diffuse themselves through the secrecies of ancient trees.

Heaven, and even the heavens, are largely a creation of earth. I am much afraid the airship is going to lose us both.

But of course all this will sound old-fashioned to the pathetic speed fiends of the modern world, the nervous children of an overstrung and murderously driven civilisation, whose illusion is that to go fast is to go far. These, and such speed fiends of so-called modern progress, are losing and destroying much for us of "the old perfections of the earth" —to quote a beautiful phrase of Lord De Tabley— and they are giving us nothing but the dust and ashes of excitement in exchange.

They have already lost us the real Japan; some day they may even lose us the real England— homes of ancient beauty, ancient strength, and ancient distinction. Odd as it may sound, electricity is no substitute for religion and those beautiful old forms of piety that tend the altar and tend the sick and tend the flowers alike, with a sense that this strange old world is a very sacred place, and mysteriously in the hands of God.

Now these speed fiends of civilisation are about to rob us of the sky. They are about to commercialise, belligerise, and even vulgarise the sky. We can but hope that the eternal compensatory law of things will make some amends to the soul of man for this tragic loss.

XII

THE WRITER'S BUSINESS

THERE are times when a man who sells words for his living, hinging words to manner as other men bring the visible portentous work of their hands, is inclined to quarrel with his business, and throw down his pen, with a sigh that he is not as other men are—soldier, sailor, or even a good honest thief. Compared with the brawny muscular occupations of his fellows—such as lawyers and stock-brokers—his work takes on a certain humiliated air of unreality. Other men are dealing with things, his business is with the shadows of things—"a shadow handling all things as shadows." Properly speaking, he does not live at all. He is merely the scrivener of life, and he longs sometimes to turn his pen into a sword—or even a pronunciamento. He seems to get a glimpse into the reason why the world, ungratefully enough, has always regarded players and minstrel folk with a certain contempt—as of the battle-axe for the lute. He too is merely an "entertainer"—sitting there *arranging* his little black tesserae upon the page. Perhaps, if his mood of discontent is very blue, he—

still the helpless victim of words, even in this moment of revolt against them—may improvise after some such fashion as this:

Tragic the fate of the man who worships the image of things,
Instead of doing some work—paints, or fiddles, or sings;
I all my life have followed the bubble of beautiful sight:
The bubble has burst, and my heart is black and bitter and—night.

Stevenson, it will be remembered, once had a bad attack of these literary blues, and blasphemed his craft in a highly moral vein. Of course, it is all nonsense. The man who was born to write would never be happy doing any other work but his own. Still, the mood is real while it lasts, and at the back of it there is a certain truth which there is no denying —and it is the realisation of that truth which thus occasionally saddens the children of the pen. It is not strictly the unreality of his work that haunts the writer, but—the unreality of himself.

Far from being unreal, it would not be difficult to prove that literature is about the realest thing in the world: real by the inexhaustible potency of its influence upon life, and real by the durable nature of its media. Is there anything more indestructible than a line of Shakespeare, more livingly lasting?

Compared with it—with all its stored *elixir vitæ*—the pyramids are pointlessly, foolishly immortal.

No, the book is real enough; it is the writer who is curiously, even tragically, unreal; and he is more unreal than any other artist, because the material of his art, the stuff his dreams are made of, is the absolute whole of life, thought as well as deed, the centre no less than the surface of existence—everything conceivable existing for the mind as well as for the eye, all emotions the most intimate, his own soul and the soul of every one else: there is nothing in human experience which is not to him material, nothing that remains personal, nothing left, so to say, for his real life. For illustration: However much in life a painter may be able to paint, there must always remain a vast realm of experience which is beyond the scope of his art, and which his brush cannot therefore dehumanise. Owing to the limitations of his art, there is much of life which he is unable to possess as a painter, a large residuum of human material left over from his art, his relation to which, therefore, is that of an average, a normal, human being. In short, his art admits of his being an average human being, a citizen, a father, as well as an artist. With the writer, however, this is not so; for in his case there is nothing of life left over for the man by the artist—because the art of the writer absorbs the absolute whole of life. Nothing

can happen to the writer merely as a private individual. His most personal joys and sorrows, his most intimate experience of every kind, is, consciously or unconsciously, material for his art. Nothing remains, as we say, for his own life. He has no life of his own. Everything that happens to him happens not, so to say, for himself, but for his art—and from this devouring comprehensiveness of his art there is for him no escape.

He dreams that he is a lover,—and indeed he experiences all the heights and depths of love's joy and sorrow, with an intensity of which real lovers seem hardly capable. Yet, when he comes out of the dream, he sees that he has not been a real lover, after all, but that he has been allowed to see and feel in a vision all the emotions of love merely in his capacity as an artist. His business with the reality is only so long as it is necessary for him to learn it for use in his art. He has come out of his love-dream with a handful of songs—which the real lovers will say over and over to each other with breaking hearts, but which he will forget. That was the purpose of the destiny that is over him. He did not fall in love for himself, though he himself deemed it so—unconsciously he was but doing the bidding of his imperious muse.

And so it is for him with the whole of life. We might again fitly compare his relation to life to that

of a priest who comprehends all human joys and sorrows, with a great pity and tenderness in his heart, but has no personal share in them. When an event happens to real men and real women, they think of it singly and simply as it is, in itself—a serious fact, maybe, directly bearing on themselves. But the writer, however near and important it may be to him and his personal life, cannot see it simply and singly. He sees it rather in a universalised image of himself. If a child is born to him, it is not so much his child as—childhood; if one dear to him should die, it is not so much a loved one who is dead as—death, and all the pity of it. His apprehension of experience is not, of course, necessarily so impersonal while he is undergoing it—though his most instinctive moments are more or less tinged with consciousness,—but, when it is once gone by, he sees that its value for him has been less the human than the literary value—using the phrase in its fullest sense; that is, its value through words to the whole world of men and women. It is by virtue of this gift of artistic metempsychosis—often superficially misunderstood as insincerity—that the writer is able to be the mouthpiece of every variety of temperament and experience. It is because, properly speaking, he has no joys and sorrows of his own to limit him that he is able to express the joys and sorrows of the whole world.

He is, of all men, the mime, the actor, *par excellence*, but with this painful difference, that whereas the actor—except perhaps in the intensest moments of the greatest actors—knows he is acting, the writer only occasionally suspects, and lives through his particular appointed experience, whatever at the moment it may be, with all the poignancy of reality, to find at the end that he has been tricked into all this heart-break, for—nothing but a song.

This is what I meant when I spoke of a writer being saddened by the unreality of himself. Often, as he stands in front of the books he has made, he feels that it is they that are real and he a shadow. They are the product of which he is merely the process—the abandoned chrysalis of his Psyche. Like the humble mother of a great man, he sees that his significance was to give birth to these children—"these forms more real than flesh and blood." Whether he lives or dies, it is no matter. All that life needed of him is there upon the shelves. Other men are valued for themselves. They are—what they are, there visible and talking before you. But you talk to the writer of his books—as you talk to an old lady, not of herself, but of her beautiful sons and daughters. Even to the reader there is something mythical about the writer. So soon as his

name has become classically established, it is difficult to conceive of him as a real man. And, in fact, the reader is unconsciously right. A real man he is not, but, like Wordsworth's cuckoo, "a wandering voice"; and this he feels himself to be. Thus he goes about among his fellows, with a sense of being abstract and phantomlike, amid all their stable lives and concrete interests. There is nothing he does not understand of this strangely pathetic world—but there is nothing in it that he can call his own; nothing but the words he makes of it, nothing but a song.

Ah! but the song!

After all, it is a wonderful business—this of words, quite a fairy-tale way of earning one's bread. Verily, the lot of the writer brings him compensations for his "unreality." It may even be that some of the real men and women would change with him—the real men and women who do the grim and weary work of the world. Their lot is real indeed. Some of them might perhaps wish it a little less real and be not unwilling to face that sense of unreality haunting the man whose business is words.

"What!" said Stevenson's landlady to him on one occasion, looking at a page of his manuscript—"what! they pay you for that!" Yes! when you come to think of it, it is a little surprising that in a world with so many real things to buy, they should

pay you for words—"pay you for *that!*" One might reasonably fear the authenticity of a check that was given you for no more tangible value received than mere words: yet the bankers cash them just like any other checks—which to one humble scrivener is one of the standing marvels of the literary life. Think of it!—they pay you for that! No doubt one's readers are occasionally no less surprised.

Yes! though, seriously speaking, the career of letters is in many respects a tragic one, yet the writer may well exclaim, "What wondrous life is this I lead!" for, like Andrea del Sarto, in Browning's poem, he does what some men dream of all their lives. Whereas other men must to a large extent occupy themselves with the mere journalism of living, and, highly or lowly stationed, are for the most part mechanics engaged in running the physical machine, the feeding and clothing and scavenging of the world, slaves in mind, if not in body as well, to some gross or frivolous human need, the writer is all the time dealing with the great elemental forces, the motive passions, of life: the things of the spirit, the dreams of the heart, the aspiration, the romance, all the higher significances, of existence. With such beautiful material as that is his "business," his "day's work." As he comes down to his word-factory in the morning, it is, say, the love-

affairs of Lancelot and Guinevere that claim his pressing attention. Or perhaps his arduous task for that day is to write on Irish fairies, or to turn some verses to a daffodil. The mere rough material of his art, so to say, is marble and flowers and precious stones; his business transactions are with the rising moon, and the ancient sea, the face of woman, and the soul of man.

And when he comes to deal with all this thrilling material, what joy is his as he shapes it according to his will, as he watches it being mysteriously transformed beneath his pen into the strange symbolism of words, which, though but little markings on paper, and having none of the advantages of arts making direct appeal to the senses, such as painting and music, are yet possessed of a magic which combines and surpasses all the other arts in one—

> Strange craft of words, strange magic of the pen,
> Whereby the dead still talk with living men;
> Whereby a sentence, in its trivial scope,
> May centre all we love and all we hope;
> And in a couplet, like a rosebud furled,
> Lie all the wistful wonder of the world.

Other folks, of course, have their poor pleasures, but for a man who loves words no joy the world can give equals for him the happiness of having achieved a fine passage or a perfect line. When

Thackeray struck his fist on the table, as the story goes, when he had finished the scene of Colonel Newcome's death, and exclaimed, "By God, this is genius," there was no empire he would have accepted in exchange for that moment. We often hear that your true artist is never satisfied with his work, his ideal escapes him, the words seem poor and lifeless, etc., compared with the dream. Whoever started that story knew very little about the literary temperament, or he would have known that —the words are the dream. The dream does not exist even as a dream, or only very imperfectly, till it is set down in words. Yes! the words are the dream.

As everything the old king touched turned to gold, so with the writer everything he touches changes into words. Yet he is well content, for if all the world be shadows to him, and he himself to himself most shadowy of all, yet life has vouchsafed him one incomparable reality—the reality of words. Here, as in an imperishable essence, is the thrilling ichor of existence in exquisite distillation. That he should ever have deemed his life unreal was but a passing concession to the coarser standards of reality; for, indeed, his is the secret of a reality purged of its mortal parts, caught in its high expressive moments, and removed from the decaying touch of time; a reality sublimated and eternalised, a reality ascended

into the finer life of words. After all, starlight is no less real than sunlight. The hot sunlight of fact is not the only reality. Indeed, to the writer life seems still more real, and how much finer, as he lives it—in the starlight of words.

Part II

SOME RETROSPECTIVE REVIEWS

SOME RETROSPECTIVE REVIEWS

I

GRANT ALLEN

I

GRANT ALLEN has died at a moment when we had most need of him, and at the saddest time for himself. Not unprophetically did he sing:—

> ". . . our grave shall be on the side
> Of the Moabite mount."

It is sadder even than that, for to die on the threshold of their promised land is the fate of every advanced dreamer and thinker. Grant Allen has died at a moment when the very vision of that promised land is obscured by every form of reactionary darkness. He lived to see, not indeed the fulfilment of the civilised ideals for which lifelong he did such valiant battle—but the overwhelming triumph of precisely all the opponent ideals which he hated and dreaded

with his whole soul. A democrat, he lived to see democracy once more in the dust, and every form of tyranny and snobbery firmer than ever in their seats; a clear-seer and far-thinker, he lived to see every form of superstition re-enthroned, and England seriously dreaming once more of Rome; a citizen-of-the-world, he lived to see race-hatred revived with mediæval fury, and narrow patriotism once more dividing nations; a man of peace, he lived to see civil freedom threatened by a militarism insolent and cruel as the world has ever known. Yes, surely it was a sad moment for Grant Allen to die. A few years before, the outlook had seemed so different, and of all those who were then eagerly lending a hand to the imminent socialistic, philosophic, artistic millennium, none was more effectively eager, or more boyishly hopeful, than Grant Allen. I think it was the indignant reception given to *The Woman who Did* which first opened his eyes to the superficial nature of the imagined "advance" of thought and social ideals in England. We hadn't even gone so far as to give patient hearing to an honest, pure-purposed, though it might be mistaken, thinker. Stones were still regarded as the appropriate reward of the prophets—small stones, indeed, as Dr. Stockmann said in *An Enemy of the People.* Minor stones for minor prophets, in a day of small things.

When I last had any long talk with Grant Allen,

I had come somewhat dolefully bewailing what we called "the slump in ideas," and I was surprised to find how little comfort he could give me. For once his optimism seemed to have failed him. For that moment he really seemed to have just "given it up"; but his despair characteristically vanished in an instant as, catching sight of a little Alpine flower, which, to his great joy, had been persuaded to grow in his hill-top garden, he gathered a blossom and began to discourse in his own fascinating way upon its "honey-guides" and all the wonder of its delicate mechanism. Straightway we had both clean forgotten the Dreyfus case, absorbed together in a flower. In cosmos and micro-cosmos, in the wonders of what went right in natural law, Grant Allen consoled himself for the marvels of what went wrong in human history. And on this particular occasion, I know I had caught him in an off moment, and the malaria with which for some months he had been depressed must be made allowance for in that momentary daunting of his spirit before the gigantic evils of the civilised world. Had I met him an hour or two later, I have no doubt I should have found him once more buoyantly confident of better things. He was too long-sighted, too tenacious of practical melioristic conceptions, to mistake a temporary reaction for permanent defeat. Yet the word "temporary" has not the same consolation for a

fighter of fifty as it has for some young combatant in his twenties, who can afford to wait out with a certain complaisance the disappointing ebb of the great wave on which he has set his hopes. "Temporary"—yes! but what is the life of man upon the earth. The tide will, of course, turn. We are only engaged in making the inevitable step backward before we make two forward—but, what joy when we make those forward steps will they be to Grant Allen? Had his life only been reasonably prolonged, as happily the life of our master-rebel, Mr. George Meredith, has been prolonged, he might have seen the sunlit crest of another mighty wave of freedom. Now he lies in the dark trough between.

II

Recently, Mr. Frederic Harrison, enumerating the chill accomplishments of the dead, gave more names to knowledge than I dare to remember. He was so many "—ists," the dead man we loved; but what would they all have mattered had he not been—Grant Allen. The world was always meanly critical of him. The little precious writers were eager to say that he was no writer, the scientists to pick holes in his science, the philosophers to smile at his *Force and Energy*. There was nothing he set himself to

do, but some small-souled thing of a critic would have his little sneer. Through all, however, he had the courage to go on being—Grant Allen. Others might be more this, or greater that. Science has its tiny grammarians, its old-maidish pedants, no less than literature; men who can no more see a generalisation than the eye of a fly can take in a mountain. Such flies, bred in the backyards of every science or art, buzzed all his life round the head of Grant Allen. For the most part he was too absorbed in the work he had to do, to notice them; and when occasionally they did sting him—he just forgot it.

Of science I know no more than one foredoomed to the practice of literature cannot escape knowing in an age of science. Grant Allen smiled when he gave me long ago a copy of *Force and Energy*—as well he might. I read it hard, because he gave it to me, and there are one or two additional lines in my brow to this day to witness that I speak the truth. All that remains to me is a somewhat shaky idea of two very rudimentary definitions, the two school-boy definitions of energy. One I know is potential and the other is kinetic, but, for the life of me, I cannot say, at this distance of time, which is which! I'm afraid I console myself with a very shadowy respect for abstract thinking. I wouldn't part with my copy of *Force and Energy* for any

inducement; but that, I fear, is on account of a simple human verse Grant Allen wrote in it as he gave it to me. I knew he would think no less of me because I barely knew what the book was about. He was one of those rare men to whom one may safely tell the truth, the truth of one's ignorance. Knowing more than most men who know much, knowledge was with him no superstition. He could respect an inspired ignorance when he met it! I need not parade the various forms of knowledge upon Grant Allen's acquirements in which I am singularly unqualified to give an opinion. How speak of him as a botanist when all I know of flowers—out of Shakespeare—I learnt by looking through that little pocket microscope, so well known to his friends, which he used constantly to twirl and twirl between his finger and thumb as he talked, and without which I really think he could not have talked at all. I have seen him stop in the middle of a sentence as he momentarily lost hold of it, and then once more go on flowingly as he had it twirling again—like the boy in Scott's class at school, whose memory seemed to be located in a certain button of his waistcoat, which he gripped confidently as his turn to answer questions came round. Scott, noting this, cut off the button; and, thus robbed of his mnemonic stay, the hapless leader of his class toppled and fell. Scott took his place, a place never regained; and

Scott's life-long remorse at the incident is well known to readers of the autobiography. No one was ever cruel enough to rob Grant Allen of his mnemonic microscope, though I confess that my fingers often came near to it. Now, I wonder if his memory lived in that little optical toy, as the soul of the great chief in *The Great Taboo* lived in the mistletoe branch of the sacred tree. Will it pass to the next inheritor of the sad little microscope? If so, what an inheritance! For one of the many remarkable things about Grant Allen was the prodigious range and accuracy and instantaneous readiness of his memory. This was so proverbial amongst his friends that one of the dearest of them coined the phrase, "We must look it up in Grant"; and in his whimsical way he once discussed the scheme of abandoning literature and setting up as a peripatetic encyclopedia, a modern Camerarius, a sort of general call-office of knowledge.

But it was not so much the extent of his knowledge as his manner of imparting it which was one of the many personal gifts of a liberally gifted personality. Dull slaves of knowledge, pedants whose one gift, after industry, is the power of making interesting things dull, naturally try to cheapen the power of making dull things interesting. They call it "popularising." Whenever a man with the gift of vivid, illustrative expression gets hold of some subject hitherto monopolised by specialists hooting

to each other in dark technalities, and makes it clear and operative for the average intelligent human being, the process is belittled as "popularising." When anyone has written history in a readable form as say Macaulay, Froude, and Green—they are said to "popularise" history. They are not dull enough to be trustworthy. Of course, the cry has been raised from the remotest time. Dante heard it in his day, when he dared to mould to a literary use a vernacular tongue. The first men who wrote serious scientific and philosophic treatises in any language but Latin—they heard it. The men who turned the Bible into English and German—didn't they hear it? O this dreadful "popularisation" of hidden knowledge, which only the bats and owls of university libraries were born to!

To some such chorus Grant Allen "popularised" science. He made it clear, he made it simple, he made it interesting, he made it positively romantic; for he was more even than an apt exponent, he was no little of a poet, and those who see nothing in such books as his *Evolutionist at Large*, *Colin Clout's Calendar*, *Vignettes from Nature*, *Moorland Idyls*, but clear statement and luminous exposition, do scant justice, to a rare literary gift exercising itself not merely with expository skill, but also artistically, upon difficult new material. More than clearness of statement was needed. Some of the dullest of

writers are as clear as they are dry. Grant Allen's individual clearness came of imagination, as his charm came of an illustrative fancy and a gay humanity applied to subjects usually immured from traffic with such frivolous qualities. Thus he not only made knowledge delightful to know, but delightful to read. In short, he gave us something like literary equivalents of his subjects. His essays were not always flowers and butterflies, but they often were, and certainly they were such flowers and butterflies as gladden but seldom the volcanic rocks of science.

Mere clearness of statement—I said just now. I beg to withdraw the suspicion of depreciation in the phrase; for the æsthetic charm of a really masterly clearness of statement is one which qualifies for high literary honours. There was a time in all our lives when we used to say that Pope was no poet—because, I suppose, he is not all sensual adjectives. A friend who had realised before me the poetry of thought clearly and rhythmically expressed long ago cured me of that. So latterly with prose, the beautiful triumphs of the musical, decorative, school—De Quincey, Pater, Stevenson—have made us think of prose too much as though it were merely a Morris wall-paper. Let it be a Morris wall-paper by all means, but let it remain everything else it can efficiently be as well. Bacon's

Essays entirely depend for their endurance on their clearness of statement.

Now, judged merely by a literary standard, valued merely as expression which is capable of taking hold of a complex, debatable subject, and treating it clearly, completely, and charmingly, though from an unfamiliar, even startling, standpoint, I would venture to make a high claim for some papers which Grant Allen probably thought comparatively little of, and anyone of which he most likely dashed off on his supernatural typewriter under the hour. I mean those explosive nutshells of what one might call prophetic thinking, first contributed to the *Westminster Gazette* and since collected into a volume under the title of *Post-Prandial Philosophy*. If any modern English writer has matched these little "journalistic" essays in swift thinking and swift statement, has packed so much mind in so small a capsule of printed matter, and has, at the same time, contrived to give so personal an accent of charm—or power of producing furious irritation (the result of charm applied to the wrong reader)—to his spare, hard-worked, undermanned, two thousand words—I think it can only be Grant Allen under still another of those pseudonyms in which he felt it only decent to drape the fruitfulness of his abounding muse.

Grant Allen was one of those instructive writers

who write best when they think least about it; when, so to speak, they forget they are writing. It was not natural to him to work self-consciously, like prose writers such as Pater and Stevenson. He wrote best when he wrote as he talked, fired with interest for the thing he had to express, and concerned only to state it as clearly and adequately as possible. Curiously enough, in the modesty of his mind it never seemed to occur to him that this was his native way of being an artist in words. Such things as the *Post-Prandial Philosophy* he regarded as all in the day's work, and prided himself rather on those occasional experiments in the more conscious and more traditional "literary" methods, where there is no doubt he was least successful. I remember, during another talk I had with him not long before he died, we chanced to speak of a recent criticism of one of his books, highly appreciative in the main, but including the remark that Mr. Allen wrote nowadays a little more hastily than formerly—though what wonder when one considered his enormous productiveness, etc.

Grant Allen, who seldom saw any criticisms of his writings, and refrained purposely from subscribing to any press-cutting agency, was pleased with the review—but he laughed good-humouredly at the statement that he wrote less carefully than formerly. "Why!" he said, "I take ten times the

pains. Look here!" and he darted off to his study with one of his long, eager strides, and brought out a type-written manuscript. "Look here!" he said, "does this look like carelessness?" The type-writing was like a moving ant-hill with minute innumerable corrections in his exquisite, small hand. Of course, I didn't say that I regretted these evidences of a growing self-consciousness in his writing, and that the old, swift, nail-on-the-head "carelessness" was best.

There are, need one say, as many ideals of literary style as there are real writers. The style Grant Allen was born to, the style that was the man himself and no other, belonged to a method of style which we are apt to regard as peculiarly modern, but which in reality is as old as any other—the style founded on talk, the colloquial style, so called, though the word "colloquial" has become too suggestive of a certain confidential unction in a writer to allow the phrase to be used with safety. It is a style which does not readily lend itself to quotation. Its *métier* is not the purple passage. I have been looking through *Post-Prandial Philosophy* to see if I can find a passage which may, without too much loss of blood, be severed from its life-giving context, in illustration of the spirited direct way of writing in which I conceive Grant Allen to have been at his best. Really, the illustration is inadequate, for these

little papers are, in their comparatively modest way, as complete and organic as sonnets. However, there is one, "About Abroad," which may endure the vivisection, and at the same time provide us with a characteristic example of Grant Allen's way of looking at things.

"The place known as Abroad is not nearly so nice a country to live in as England. The people who inhabit Abroad are called Foreigners. They are in every way and at all times inferior to Englishmen. These Post-Prandials used once to be provided with a sting in their tail, like the common scorpion. By way of change, I turn them out now with a sting in their head, like the common mosquito. Mosquitoes are much less dangerous than scorpions, but they're a deal more irritating. Not that I am sanguine enough to expect I shall irritate Englishmen. . . . To most Englishmen, the world divides itself naturally into two unequal and non-equivalent portions—Abroad and England. Of these two, Abroad is much the larger country; but England, though smaller, is vastly more important. Abroad is inhabited by Frenchmen and Germans, who speak their own foolish and chattering languages. Part of it is likewise pervaded by Chinamen, who wear pigtails; and the outlying districts belong to the poor heathen, chiefly interesting as a field of missionary enterprise, and a possible market for Manchester piece-goods. . . . If you ask most people what has become of Tom, they will answer at once with the specific information, 'Oh, Tom

has gone Abroad.' I have one stereotyped rejoinder to an answer like that—'What part of Abroad, please?' That usually stumps them. Abroad is Abroad: and like the gentleman who was asked in examination to name the minor prophets, they decline to make invidious distinctions. It is nothing to them whether he is tea-planting in the Himalayas, or sheep-farming in Australia, or orange-growing in Florida, or ranching in Colorado. If he is not in England, why then he is elsewhere; and elsewhere is Abroad, and is indivisible. . . . People will tell you, 'Foreigners do this'; 'Foreigners do that'; 'Foreigners smoke so much'; 'Foreigners always take coffee for breakfast.' 'Indeed,' I love to answer, 'I've never observed it myself in Central Asia.' . . . Would it surprise you to learn that most people live in Asia? Would it surprise you to learn that most people are poor benighted heathen, and that, of the remainder, most people are Mahommedans, and that, of the Christians, who come next, most people are Roman Catholics, and that, of the other Christian sects, most people belong to the Greek Church, and that, last of all, we get Protestants, more particularly Anglicans, Wesleyans, Baptists? Have you ever really realised the startling fact that England is an island off the coast of Europe? that Europe is a peninsula at the end of Asia? that France, Germany, Italy, are the fringe of Russia? Have you ever really realised that the English-speaking race lives mostly in America? that the country is vastly more populous than London? that our class is the froth and scum of society? Think these things out, and try to measure them on

the globe. And when you speak of Abroad, do please specify what part of it."

This, I submit, is very good writing; and, like all good writing, very pleasant writing. Its interest for us does not end in the delivery of its message. It is a pleasure to read for its own sake—for the unmistakable sound of a man's voice behind it, one man's voice and no other's, the sense of nearness it brings across the page to a forcible, thinking, humorous, really *human* human being. It is not only clever, it is good writing, in the true sense of the word. You may see little in it to wonder at. I never said it was wonderful, or great. Writing, like men and women, need not be great to be good. But this I will hazard, that such "mere journalistic" writing, backed by a personality such as Grant Allen's, is more likely to engage the attention of that much-courted tribunal, posterity, than the sugar-candy euphuism, the imitation Stevenson, which passes for high art at the moment, and towards which Grant Allen, in the innocence of his heart, used sometimes, I know, to cast longing eyes. Of course, the passage I have quoted is only an illustration in little of a style which Grant Allen wielded no less successfully on a broader canvas and with a fuller brush. Probably the fullest, most masterly writing he ever achieved is contained in the numerous articles which he contributed to *The Fortnightly*

Review. These articles will, no doubt, be collected some day. Those relating to anthropology and folk-lore have already been worked into his book on *The Evolution of the Idea of God.* Readers in England—of course, I mean "popular" readers—who are unfortunate enough to think somewhat in advance of their fellows, owe more than perhaps they remember to those stimulating germinal articles in which Grant Allen, earliest and most successfully, sowed the dragon's teeth which produced him such a plentiful crop of those armed men, the critics. And in one of those articles, particularly, one which necessarily subjected him to their blindest misunderstanding—I refer to "The New Hedonism"—he came nearest, I think, to fulfilling that wistfully held ideal of decorative prose to which I have made reference. What a tapestry can be made out of sheer knowledge this passage, I think, successfully illustrates:—

"Not otherwise is it with the beauty that appeals to the eye. Every lovely object in organic nature owes its loveliness directly to sexual selection. The whole æsthetic sense in animals had this for its origin. Every spot on the feathery wings of butterflies was thus produced; every eye on the gorgeous, glancing plumage of the peacock. The bronze and golden beetles, the flashing blue of the dragon-fly, the brilliant colours of tropical moths, the lamp of the glow-worm, the gleaming light of the fire-fly in the

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thicket, spring from the same source. The infinite variety of crest and gorget among the iridescent humming-birds; the glow of the trogon, the barbets among the palm-blossoms; the exquisite plumage of the birds of paradise; the ball-and-socket ornament of the argus pheasant; the infinite hues of parrot and macaw; the strange bill of the gaudy toucan, and the crimson wattles of the turkey, still tell one story. The sun-birds deck themselves for their courtship in ruby and topaz, in chrysoprase and sapphire. Even the antlers of deer, the twisted horns of antelopes, and the graceful forms or dappled coats of so many other mammals have been developed in like manner by sexual selection. The very fish in the sea show similar results of æsthetic preferences. The butterfly fins of the gurnard and the courting colours of the stickleback have but one explanation. . . . Even the basis of the dance, and, therefore, to a great extent of the lyric, poetic, and dramatic faculty, is closely bound up in like manner with the choice in pairing. The minuets of the blackcock, the aerial antics of the peewit, the meeting-places and ball-rooms of so many grouse and other game-birds, the strutting of the peacock, the display of the argus pheasant, the coquetting of butterflies, the strange courtship of spiders. . . ."

A little more self-conscious art, a little less ethical enthusiasm, could have made a little more of the material; such material of strangely shaped and coloured words as "trogon," and "barbet," and "toucan"—but merely to bring together, in the

inspiration of argument rather than art, so many short clauses, each containing at least one purple or orange name, stimulating to the imagination either by strangeness or familiarity, was no small literary success.

One more quotation I shall make, again illustrative of Grant Allen's occasional success in what I daresay he would have called "the higher style," a passage in which for once he dropped the irony which was his usual manner, and allowed the aspiration of his heart, the simple sincerity of his hope, to escape in a passage of eloquent pleading, through which blows the keen sweet air one of the purest of recent lives could only breathe. It is from the preface to his least fortunate book, his second "hill-top novel," *The British Barbarians*:—

"I am writing in my study on a heatherclad hill-top. When I raise my eye from my sheet of foolscap it falls upon miles and miles of broad, open moorland. My window looks out upon unsullied nature. Everything around is fresh, and pure, and wholesome. Through the open casement the scent of the pines blows in with the breeze from the neighbouring firwood. Keen airs sigh through the pine-needles. Grasshoppers chirp from deep tangles of bracken. The song of a skylark drops from the sky like soft rain in summer; in the evening, a night-jar croons to us his monotonously passionate love-wail, from his perch on the gnarled boughs of the wind-swept larch that crowns the upland. But away below

in the valley, as night draws on, a lurid glare reddens the north-eastern horizon. It marks the spot where the great wen of London heaves and festers. Up here on the freer hills the sharp air blows in upon us, limpid and clear from a thousand leagues of open ocean; down there in the crowded town it stagnates and ferments, polluted with the diseases and vices of centuries. . . . Far, far below, the theatre and the music-hall spread their garish gas-lamps. Let who will heed them. But here on the open hill-top we know fresher and more wholesome delights. Those feverish joys allure us not. O decadents of the town, we have seen your sham idyls, your tinsel Arcadias. We have tired of their stuffy atmosphere, their dazzling jets, their weary ways, their gaudy dresses; we shun the sunken cheeks, the lack-lustre eyes, the heart-sick souls of your painted goddesses. . . . Your halls are too stifling with carbonic acid gas; for us, we breathe oxygen. . . . How we smile, we who live here, when some dweller in the mists and smoke of the valley confounds our delicate atmosphere, redolent of honey, and echoing the manifold murmur of bees, with that stifling miasma of the gambling hell and the dancing saloon! Trust me, dear friend, the moorland air is far other than you fancy. You can wander up here along the purple ridges, hand locked in hand with those you love, without fear of harm to yourself or your comrade. No Bloom of Ninon here, but fresh cheeks like the peach-blossom where the sun has kissed it; no casual fruition of loveless, joyless harlots, but lifelong saturation of your own heart's desire in your own

heart's innocence. Ozone is better than all the champagne in the Strand or Piccadilly. If only you will believe it, it is purity, and life, and sympathy, and vigor. Its perfect freshness and perpetual fount of youth keep your age from withering. It crimsons the sunset, and lives in the afterglow. If these delights thy mind may move, leave, O, leave the meretricious town, and come to the airy peaks."

III

These quotations illustrate not merely Grant Allen's talent for literary expression, but they may stand, too, as illustrations of the kind of thought he best cared to express, and the temper in which he strove to express it. Grant Allen was one of those whom an inscrutable Providence creates Englishmen (I know, of course, technically he was Irish-French-Canadian) for the express purpose of their differing on every conceivable question with their fellow countrymen. This is one of the many ways in which England is seen to be in the peculiar care of the invisible powers. Perhaps the soil of no other nation is so richly fertilised with the martyred remains of its artists and thinkers. Grant Allen was one of those true patriots who do their country the great service of differing from it on every possible occasion. Was there any subject on which

Grant Allen agreed with England—or any subject on which England agreed with Grant Allen? I suppose one might, with diligence, find one or two. Read, for example, those "Plain Words on the Woman Question," in Number 274 (October, 1889) of *The Fortnightly Review*, and you will find him ten years ago vigorously sounding that anti-Malthusian alarm which Zola has set to mighty drums in *Fécondité*, a book of which, one hears, England has a yet no need. Yet, let it by all means be allowed that Grant Allen was at variance with his country on most other questions. He was a Home-Ruler, a Socialist, an "Atheist" (so-called) and (in theory) a "Free-Lover"—everything but a housebreaker. I could think of nothing worse to say of him were I *advocatus diaboli*. O yes! there is some fear that he was a Little Englander. But there are differences which, like certain bombs, explode; and there are differences which fall softly in the grass of oblivion, and are forgotten. England now takes socialism and atheism (long since respectable as "agnosticism") quite calmly. The Home-Ruler and the Little Englander it keeps alive because political meetings must have something to play with. But —Free Love! ! An evil and adulterous generation naturally takes that seriously. Grant Allen was at liberty to call London a "squalid village," or to plump down any of his delicious paradoxes, such

[illegible]

[illegible] Allen [illegible] imitation [illegible] greater novelists [illegible] and Mr. Hardy [illegible] Then he wrote *The Woman Who Did.*

Grant Allen regarded this as the most important book he ever wrote. Perhaps, after all, he was right. I didn't think so when I first read it; for it is quite certain that, technically speaking, it is far from being his best novel; nor, well and sometimes beautifully written, is it the best, that is the most individually, written of his books. A book, however, may be a bad novel, it may be indifferently written; and yet it may be an important book. *Robert Elsmere* was, for England, an important book. *Degeneration*, for all its absurdities, was an important book. Neither book was "literature," nor science, nor anything that mattered artistically or anywise technically. Each book was merely a *poster* —a poster, a vivid advertising shock announcing new ideas; that is, not brand-new ideas, not ideas that had never been heard of before (for where shall we find those in historic times?), but ideas practically untried upon large areas of mankind, towards the trial of which the spirit of the age seemed blindly to be moving. Its very title declared *The Woman Who Did* to be a poster of rebellion; and as such it was a remarkably conspicuous success—for, as I said on its publication, the story was nought, the characters were puppets, a philosopher's puppets; yet, so momentous was the moral idea it advertised, so single-minded and pure-of-heart was the motive enthusiasm of the man who wrote it, that it sold as

though it had been some really interesting romance by Miss Marie Corelli or Mr. Hall Caine.

I do it, and certainly intend it, no disrespect, when I speak of it as the advertisement of an idea. There is nothing that ideas need so much as advertisement. Grant Allen always had this happy knack, by the sheer innocence of his almost childlike sincerity, of attracting, or shall I say, repelling, immediate attention for any cause he cared to espouse. His lightest phrase sounded a gong which summoned his fellow-countrymen to put out with all their might the fire he had just kindled. It mattered little what it was he talked of. He could not avoid making the poster phrase, the poster word. If you seriously want to save the world, you have first to make the world hear, and secondly to make the world throw stones. Grant Allen had a really enviable faculty of provoking the world to throw stones. He was like a great speaker. However unruly his audience, he had but to raise a finger of audacious phrase, and, whatever happened afterwards, he was *heard.* Take a long-since tranquil theme, such as the poetry of Mr. William Watson. James Ashcroft Noble knew it almost before it was born, he wrote of it, persuasively as he could write, in important journals, such as *The Academy* and *The Spectator.* At one time Mr. Hutton seemed to edit *The Spectator* for the very proper purpose of

announcing the truly momentous presence in our midst of the author of "Wordsworth's Grave." The present writer was reciting it with inconsiderate proselytism quite ten years ago. Yet *The National Review*, in which it appeared, passed virtually unnoticed, save by the little band who looked out for it, knowing it was to appear. An unappreciated genius, Mr. Watson wandered unrecognised on the Yorkshire moors. Then Grant Allen took up his speaking trumpet, modestly enough, indeed, as he always did, and said: "Let there be William Watson," and there was William Watson. Small critics, who knew as little of the poet as they knew of his trumpeter, said, "What does Grant Allen know about poetry? Grant Allen, the populariser of science, the self-confessed manufacturer of shoddy fiction." But Grant Allen had blown his trumpet, that "coarse" trumpet of his, and England—including Lord Rosebery—heard. Of course, Mr. Watson would have been no less a poet though Grant Allen had never spoken, just as Armenia had been Armenia though *The Purple East* had never been written; but it is, after all, a pleasant thing to be recognised as William Watson a little ahead of posterity's finding it out, and I am sure Mr. Watson remembers with gratitude that the noble, forcible, and fascinating personality of Grant Allen was once enthusiastically his very effective poster.

Similarly, in regard to *The Woman Who Did*: the ethical motive was, of course, familiar enough—old as Shelley, old as the hills. A year or two before its publication Mr. Meredith had published, in *Lord Ormont and his Aminta*, the sympathetic drama of similar revolt, but the Conservative Press which upholds the world—like the tortoise in the Buddhist cosmogony—had not fallen about his ears. Mr. Meredith's style is a coat of mail which protects the most innovating idea. But there was a deeper reason than that. England dreads the abstract; give it plain, common-sense, concrete adultery, and it will forgive and forget. But of abstract "adultery"—adultery from the highest ethical motives—it is suspicious. And, of course, in a sense it is right. To break a law is one thing, to set up that law-breaking as a new law is another. Of course, in *Lord Ormont and his Aminta* Mr. Meredith did that very thing. But then you can esoterically exhibit law-breaking art in the protective obscurity of, say, The Dudley Gallery, which would provoke a storm of comment if placarded, say, at the Strand entrance to Waterloo Bridge. So much depends on where the nude in truth is hung. *Lord Ormont and his Aminta* was merely one human exception—in spite of its author intending to make a new rule; *The Woman Who Did* announced an aggressive new rule. It possessed no humanity to excuse it. It sought

no excuse. It was intended as a challenge, and its success was, that it was accepted as such. That it should be furiously attacked was a part of that success. Otherwise there had been no necessity to write it. In form a novel, in reality it belongs to our noble series of change-demanding pamphlets. As literature it has small value, as a brilliant noise on behalf of human progress it means a great deal.

Perhaps it were as well to explain that, while in the abstract I agreed with Grant Allen's theory on this matter long before I knew Grant Allen—in fact just after I met Shelley—later experience of life has led me to doubt its practical, working efficiency. Indeed, I am venturous, superstitious, old-fashioned enough to wonder if, at all events for certain natures, there is not a more radical criticism to be made of those theories. Let us allow that there are happy natures constituted in the light of reason who can love according to the law which Grant Allen summarises in this neat quatrain:—

> "I hold that heart full poor that owns its boast
> To throb in tune with but one throbbing breast.
> Who numbers many friends loves friendship most;
> Who numbers many loves loves each love best."

I, too, thought so once, but I have come to realise that what Grant Allen meant by love is not in the real sense—that is the absurd, the tragic, the comic, the mystic—sense, love at all. He really spoke of

warm life-forces compel it to do the wrong. As Grant Allen once wittily said of a friend, humanity "longs to be a saint, but it loves to be a sinner."

I think it was this in Grant Allen which closed his eyes to the beauty of London. The beauty of London, if one may say so, is the beauty of a richly-coloured meerschaum. It smells rankly of old romantic sin. With its freakish rings of rich brown, it is, side by side with a nice clean new meerschaum, a disgrace. Life has had its way with it, and it is coloured accordingly. Now, I think I do him no wrong when I say that Grant Allen rather loved the new meerschaum. I don't think he would have cared much to live, say, in an old historic house. At every turn it would have reminded him of wrong thinking, of crushing social wrong. He could never have slept in it. The "monopolist instincts" would have shrieked about his bed at night. He loved the beauty of new-made things, life washed clean in the dawn; and I am far from implying that he was anything but right in so doing. The beauty of antiquity was, I imagine, to his way of thinking—partly dirt and partly superstition: of course, I mean mere age, that is the humanisation which comes to anything through mere use. I am hardly writing for a reader who needs to be told of his appreciation, his exceptionally intuitive interpretation, of the definitely, demonstrably, beautiful

things of antiquity. His knowledge of and insight into the Italian painters of the Renaissance is well known, and I have had few more fascinating experiences than hearing him expound his original interpretation of the symbolism of, say, Botticelli's *Primavera:* a picture, indeed, sufficiently hackneyed to provide opportunity for a *tour de force* of original exposition.

The fact remains that Grant Allen loved human ideals more than human realities—as, indeed, we all should do, but do not. This ideality accounts for the unreality—as fiction—of such books as *The Woman Who Did;* but, at the same time, it is nothing against their usefulness as brilliant and forcible social tracts. To write a really influential tract—well, what novel since that lovely tract of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is worth mentioning beside such an achievement?

IV

I am thus insidiously led up to Grant Allen's novels without a purpose. Of these I propose to say little—for a good reason. On entering into friendship with Grant Allen it was obligatory to make one promise only: never, under whatsoever temptation, to read one of his "commercial" novels. I feel myself no little unworthy as I think that my

poor human nature proved incapable of strictly fulfilling this condition. And, indeed, I must not forget Grant Allen made one exception: *For Maimie's Sake.* This was an earlier illustration of *The Woman Who Did* idea; and, though there is much that Grant Allen wrote that I prefer to it, I admit that in "Maimie" he outlined a type of original interest, and indeed created the only living woman in his books. For, indeed, in no study so much as that of woman would his passion for the abstract so absolutely unfit him to arrive at reality. Man may be imperfectly amenable to rule, but every woman is an exception. Woman, indeed, *is* human nature.

I once meditated an appreciation of Grant Allen's "pot-boilers," which only accident prevented my carrying out; and I am afraid, unintentionally indeed, that I hurt him by saying that his current "pot-boiler," *Under Sealed Orders,* was a much better novel than *The Woman Who Did.* Some day I may fulfil my old intention, and I think I should not find it difficult to prove that Grant Allen was a far better novelist than he had the smallest interest in being.

As a teller of the short story he is admitted to have been a brilliant pioneer. It was an appropriate coincidence that very shortly before his death he should have published a selection of twelve of the most important of his tales, with a characteristic confession of

how he came to be a story-teller at all. Of course, he was a born story-teller; but, as all gifts are the revelation of accident, it was the accident of his having thrown a scientific idea into the form of a story that revealed Grant Allen's story-telling both to himself and to the world. His best stories always bore the mark of this accidental origin. They were always the illustration of some scientific or moral conceptions: from the famous *The Reverend John Creedy* to *The Woman Who Did.* But their success was that they lost nothing in narrative interest on that account. *The Child of the Phalanstery, Ivan Greet's Masterpiece,* are both, so to speak, allegorical in intention; but, all the same, they hold and move one just as if they were the simplest emotional stories, and not in the least the attractive envelope of an ethical pill. Besides, sheerly as story-telling, some of Grant Allen's stories qualify him as an inventor. *The Reverend John Creedy, Mr. Chung,* and many other such stories, justify his timid enough claim to be one of the earliest writers of "the romance of the clash of civilisations." He used sometimes to say that, misspent as his life had been, he was the maker of the phrase "gone Fantee." With touching humility, in the preface to that collection of *Twelve Tales* just referred to, he mentions with characteristic (let one say for him, absurd) deference "the Kiplings," the "Wellses": "I shall be amply con-

tent if our masters permit me to pick up the crumbs that fall from the table of the Hardys, the Kiplings, the Merediths, and the Wellses."

I have nothing to say to "the Hardys" and "the Merediths," except to protest against a somewhat hasty use of the plural. But "the Kiplings" and "the Wellses"! Well, I kow-tow (as Grant Allen would say) to those brilliant writers with all my heart—but to be able to tell a tale better than Grant Allen, that is to go one better than one's tutor, does not prove one a more important person than Grant Allen. "No talent can be supremely effective," said that very clear-sighted observer, George Henry Lewes, "unless it act in close alliance with certain moral qualities." "Art" is only of supreme importance when it is either the embodiment of that beauty which is the final unquestionable holiness, or when it is the voice of the universal absolutes of man. To be "diabolically clever" is not the same thing. To cinematograph the past, or to cinematograph the present, is nothing like so important as—to pray with all your heart for the future. Prayer is usually allowed to be exempt from minor æsthetic criticism.

And this leads me to speak of a little volume which must certainly not go uncelebrated here, and which, in the whole enormous library of Grant Allen's writings, has a more important place than has yet

been allowed to it, or than he himself would have claimed for it, the little volume of his poems quaintly entitled: *The Lower Slopes, Reminiscences of Excursions round the Base of Helicon, undertaken for the most part in early manhood.* If it contained no other poem than this striking "Prayer," it would have a sufficient *raison d'être:*

"A crowned Caprice is god of this world;
On his stony breast are his white wings furled.
No ear to listen, no eye to see,
No heart to feel for a man hath he.

"But his pitiless arm is swift to smite;
And his mute lips utter one word of might,
'Mid the clash of gentler souls and rougher,
'Wrong must thou do, or wrong must suffer.'
Then grant, O dumb, blind god, at least that we
Rather the sufferers than the doers be."

I was glad to see that Mr. Lang, in a beautiful, so to say, playfully elegiac, article *à propos* Grant Allen's death, referred to him as "a sad good Christian." I too had ventured to write that, like Shelley, he was all his life a Christian without knowing it. Certainly his nature was filled with a pity which in the depth of his tenderness was distinctly "Christian." His favourite motto was "Self-development is greater than self-sacrifice"; but, when one remembers the deliberate way in which he sacrificed all his literary and scientific dreams to the domestic

ideal, and preached constantly in his stories that a man with a wife and children must be husband or father first and artist afterwards—one realises that, when his abstract theories were put to the human test, Grant Allen considered first the human need in the situation and last of all his theories. Moralist as he was, he was far indeed from being a doctrinaire.

Recently, re-reading some of his old articles, I came upon a characteristic touch of his pity in a quaintly unexpected place: a review of Stevenson's *Travels with a Donkey*. Grant Allen was even then generously "discovering" other people. It is to be feared that the jesting thanks of one of his *protégées* too often came true: "Need I say that you have earned my blackest ingratitude?" "There is many a true word spoken in jest," was Grant Allen's quiet comment on the occasion. But, to return to Stevenson, after praising the book for its various now classical qualities, Grant Allen concludes thus: "Nevertheless, since one cannot wholly divorce one's self from the ethical feeling of one's age, I must confess that I should have liked Mr. Stevenson better if he had beaten his donkey less unmercifully, and, above all, if he had not used that wooden goad, with its eighth of an inch of pin. This is not the place to discuss the broad question of 'no morality in art': but most Englishmen will perhaps feel

Nymphs in the coppice, Naiads in the fountain,
  Gods on the craggy height and roaring sea.
We find but soulless sequences of matter,
  Fact linked to fact by adamantine rods,
Eternal bonds of former sense and latter,
  Dead laws for living gods."

Grant Allen's, too, was the happy characterisation of FitzGerald's Omar as "This rose of Iran on an English stock." But I must quote no more from a little book which easily proves that Grant Allen, while he was, what is still more important, a poet in the larger sense, in temperament, in prose, was also a skilful and forcible poet in verse.

V

In fact, he was, perhaps, the most variously gifted man of letters of his time. Sheerly as a literary workman, he can seldom have been equalled. His capacity for working under every disadvantage of circumstance was almost superhuman, as his obedient adaptability to the demands of the public or the publishers by whom he had to live, was as astonishing as it was tragic. When, to his surprise, as he tells in his preface to the *Twelve Tales* already referred to, Mr. Chatto asked him to write stories, he characteristically tells how: "Not a little surprised at this request, I sat down like an obedient

workman, and tried to write one at my employer's bidding."

Similarly, on a larger scale, when Sir George Newnes offered a thousand pounds for a sensational novel, he produced *What's Bred in the Bone* with cynical cleverness. That a man of his calibre should have been compelled thus to prostitute gifts so important, however brave and laughing a face he put upon it, is one of the saddest things in recent literary history, as it is eloquent once more of the cruel indifference to the arduous conditions of literary creation in a country which, nevertheless, plumes itself particularly upon its noble literature. But that he was able to do it so brilliantly will, doubtless, be the feature of the case which will most fill the down-trodden literary mind with envy.

In the mere mechanical—but how important—matter of "turning out" his "copy" he was quite amazing. Anyone who has stayed in his house will remember how his typewriter could be heard, as you crossed the hall, punctually beginning to click at nine every morning, and, if you eavesdropped, you would seldom note a pause in its rapid clicking. I don't think that Grant Allen can even once in his life have "stopped for a word." Interruptions made no difference. I have known him stop in the middle of a sentence at the sound of the luncheon gong, and then, having found on repairing to the

dining-room that the gong was a little premature, go back to his typewriter, finish the sentence and begin another. Like all men who do much in this world, he had a genius for using up remnants of time. He had, too, an almost Gladstonian power of concentration. Whatever was going on, he could write if he had made up his mind to. I think that the only thing that ever worried him was a picture askew or a pot out of its place. He couldn't be happy till he had set that right. Otherwise, however, most things could happen without their interfering with the strong current of his thought bent on expressing itself. One reminiscence to the point I always recall when I think of him in this connection. Some five years ago I was domiciled in his house for many weeks. I was there because Grant Allen and his brave and beautiful wife had taken to heart a private sorrow of mine, with a personal sympathy such as few friends are capable of. There were days when I didn't feel quite equal to the journalism I had undertaken to do; and I remember that, on one of them, Grant Allen offered to write a brief review for me. If I remember rightly, the book was that which first revealed to us the charming personality of Miss Fiona Macleod—*Pharais*. It chanced, too, that on this particular day certain other friends were staying in the house, friends who were interested to

see Grant Allen use his typewriter. Some five of us gathered round him as he sat down to it. "Well," he said, "what shall I write? Oh, I might as well write that review"—and off he went, and in something like ten minutes he had written five hundred bright pointed words, for which Miss Fiona Macleod must, I am sure, have been very grateful, and which she will no doubt admire all the more for this confession of their true authorship. Perhaps I may be allowed to add, as a journalist who has still to go on earning many loaves, that reviews signed by my name are not usually written by anyone more distinguished than myself. But I recalled this incident only to illustrate Grant Allen's capacity for working brilliantly under all circumstances. There were we five people bending over him, but he thought absolutely nothing about us. He was busy with "the Celtic movement," and something he wanted to say about it. We were hardly phantasmagoria.

So I come to the man himself, to the personal loss. That loss needs an elegy for its expression. Nowadays we write our elegies in the form of hurried leading articles, and perhaps such a column of valedictory prose as Mr. Lang's column in the *Daily News* is a more real expression of loss than that artistic sorrow remembered in tranquillity which elaborates an *In Memoriam*. When the wreath is

so magnificent, one is apt to forget our sorrow in our æsthetic self-gratulation over our wreath.

Mr. Frederic Harrison, in his funeral oration, laid stress, over and over again, as I was glad to note, on two elements of Grant Allen's character: his courage and his "militant sincerity." Yes, the courage hidden in that frail frame of his was almost pathetic; and he was certainly the sincerest man I have ever known. He possessed the simple truthfulness of genius, and perhaps one might say more particularly, of scientific genius. It is the business of the man of science to tell the truth; it is his *raison d'être.* He is so concerned to "find out" that he never conceives that there can be any necessity to conceal. That is why he so often shocks his fellows—in the pure innocence of discovery. I don't think, as I have said elsewhere, that Grant Allen ever had an *arrière pensée* in his life. He never realised the necessity of the social lie, or any other form of dissimulation. Some of us more worldly-wise, and thus on a lower level than he, would sometimes protest, on his own behalf, against his extreme open-mindedness on such matters as the commercial disabilities of telling the truth. He was, of course, in the main a financial sucess, but there was a brief period after *The Woman Who Did* when publishers and editors fought shy of him; and during that period he would confide to any

afternoon caller, with perfect simplicity, and not the smallest sense of "martyrdom," that he stood idle in the market-place, because no one dared to hire him. I have heard him say frankly to a certain young writer, during an interchange of "shop": "Why I never received so much for a novel in my life!" Yet he was very well paid, as literary payment goes. Any one who cares can share his printed confidences in this matter, and enjoy an excellent example of his style in his old *Idler* article on "My First Book," since reprinted, with other confessions, by Messrs. Chatto and Windus. It ends with this now-famous advice: "Don't take to literature if you've capital enough in hand to buy a good broom, and energy enough to annex a vacant crossing."

Grant Allen was too great to tell lies, even white lies. He never realised the necessity. He could compromise to the extent of doing brilliantly the work he hated, but more he would not do. No necessity, no torture, would have persuaded him to deny, or suppress, the truth that was in him. He might write of something else, but whenever he was obliged to write of vital matters, whatever it cost him, he told the truth.

Also, he was, I think, the most completely "emancipated" of any recent English mind expressing itself in literature. I never observed a trace of that succumbing to the inherited habits of thought

and feeling which even the most "advanced" thinkers have developed towards the close of life. He was entirely devoid of any form of "superstition." His reason was, to the last, master of the house of life. Perhaps he saw a little too clearly; for, as his most famous *protégée* writes:—

> "They see not clearliest
> Who see all things clear."

Perhaps Grant Allen too confidently set up Darwin and Mr. Herbert Spencer in the place of his lost Hebrew prophets. There is, as I said above, something mystic in human life that he refused to consider. With the presumptuous flamboyance of youth I sometimes told him so. Yet, at the same time, no one had such an overwhelming cosmic sense of the wonder of the universe. Perhaps his wonder in presence of that appalling spectacle dwarfed his appreciation of the greater mystery of the soul of man. The brilliant organisation of the universe, perhaps, a little distracted him from the human miracle. I wish I could borrow his phonographic memory to record a spoken rhapsody of his of the wonder, not of the world, but of the worlds, gently directed at me, one evening, in answer to some absurd boyish criticism of his way of thought. I remember it only as music—as I remember most of his talk.

And what an amazing talker he was! No pose-talk, but talk easily born of his knowledge and love of the subject that at the moment occupied him. No more brilliant generaliser can ever have lived. Present him with the most unexpected fact, or the most complex set of circumstances (as it might seem to you), and he had his theory in an instant, and was making it as clear, by the aid of his marvellously copious and exact vocabulary, as though he had drawn it on the air. And bright things by the score all the way! His gift of stating the most intricate matter impromptu in a few simple words, and of pouring out the most varied and profound learning as though he were telling a fairy tale, can hardly have been equalled, and certainly can never have been surpassed.

Well, we shall "look it up in Grant" no more. The swallows he loved to see flying in and out from the eaves of his beautiful house at Hindhead will come back, but he will come back no more. The nightjar, his favourite bird, will perch near the windows at twilight with its hoarse, sad, churring cry, but Grant Allen will hear it no more. All the goodness, the humour, the tenderness, the imagination, the intellect, the brilliance, the love and laughter that were Grant Allen are now a little dust.

At his funeral I had in my pocket his little volume of poems, and, as we turned away from the sad

place where we had left him, two of his beautiful lines were murmuring in my mind:—

> "Perchance a little light will come with morning,
> Perchance I shall but sleep."

Perchance!

October, 1899.

7

TENNYSON

[illegible]

F[illegible] to time a figure [illegible] satisfying as [illegible] personality, in [illegible] was the impressive, [illegible] sacred poet," the [illegible] voice and [illegible] of the world, and [illegible] The dramatic sense [illegible] demands of its divine [illegible] and authority proper [illegible] They must in them-[illegible] The great [illegible] the great priest [illegible] the great poet wear the grand [illegible] air of [illegible] have fulfilled this [illegible] action [illegible] But none has [illegible] a more august fitness, as of a man apart, a chosen messenger of the unseen gods, than Alfred Tennyson. While he lived we had a feeling that, so to say, a personal representative of

Apollo dwelt among us, an authentic vates, touched, as it were, with a certain supernatural distinction; and, we said to ourselves, with Mr. Lang, "The master's yonder in the isle"—with a haunted sense of the immortal made flesh and housed with us, a sense, too, of the security of divine interests in a material age. With his death that sense of security seemed to vanish, and it seemed, indeed, to us, as to Tennyson himself on the death of Byron years before, that poetry, too, was dead. "Byron is dead," he had carved on a rock at Somersby that April day in 1824, "a day when the whole world seemed to be darkened for me." Years after, his son, visiting the old Lincolnshire home, sought for the inscription, but in vain. One can imagine few inscriptions one would care more to have had preserved. "Byron is dead," carved the boy of fourteen, little dreaming of a day far off in the future years when, "to the noise of the mourning of a mighty nation," his own funeral would seem a bereavement no less final.

"Carry the last great bard to his last bed," sang Mr. William Watson, as they brought Alfred Tennyson to his place of honoured rest, with Chaucer and Browning for his immortal neighbours.

Who that was there will ever forget that morning in Westminster Abbey, the ineffable, sweet solemnity of the beautiful death music, as, to the ethereal singing of his own "Silent Voices," the

great coffin, wreathed with laurel from Virgil's tomb, was carried in by illustrious friends, friends whose names also were even then becoming legendary—Froude and Jowett and Lecky and Kelvin. At the dead man's side, beneath the laurels and the roses, lay, as we knew, the copy of "Cymbeline" on which his eyes had last rested in the moonlight a few nights before, and the whole beautiful rite was one of those perfect happenings which have a dream-like completeness, the inner spiritual significance and the outer form combining in a harmony of proud pathos indescribably impressive. Here was the majesty of the poet's lot, as our boyish fancies have dreamed it, visibly attested. Here was noble Fame visibly embodied with a sacred eloquence that thrilled the heart. This it was to be a great poet, the voice of a nation's soul—

> The song that nerves a nation's heart
> Is in itself a deed.

That early vision of his of the grandeur of the poet's destiny was here finally fulfilled—here one might see, veritably witnessed by a nation's mourning, how "one poor poet's scroll" had in very deed shaken the world. Yes, it was a legendary morning, the beautiful legendary close to a legendary life. It was good to be there—an inspiring reminder to what fine issues our mortal lives ascend.

And the life thus closed had been, from its beginning, lived in the spirit of one chosen. No English poet, save Milton, has felt himself so "dedicated" as Alfred Tennyson. Always with him, as with his master, Virgil, it was,—the sweet Muses whom, before all things, I serve!

> Me vero primum dulces ante omnia Musæ,
> Quarum sacra fero ingenti percussus amore,
> Accipiant, cælique, vias et sidera monstrent,
> Defectus solis varios lunæque labores. . . .

And it is beautiful, too, to remember how, from the first, his family and friends had accepted him, confirmed him in his high calling. Poetry was very much in the Tennyson family. His father and his brothers were all more or less poets—good poets, too,—but Alfred was the poet in whose fame they proudly sank their own individual ambitions. "I make a slave of you," said the old man to his son Hallam, as he asked some service of him on his death-bed; and, indeed, the poetic gift has seldom blossomed into an environment so hospitable to its nurture. Tennyson knew nothing of the stern apprenticeship which falls to most poets, and it may be that his super-sensitiveness to criticism, of which so many quaint stories are told, was due in some measure to the sheltered conditions of his muse.

[illegible] paying [illegible] very different [illegible] had [illegible] and [illegible] some personal talk [illegible] morning [illegible] some [illegible] but [illegible] [illegible] I am [illegible]

[illegible] common [illegible] importance. [illegible] still [illegible] I am [illegible] seems to have [illegible] respect. The [illegible] the greatest [illegible] the minute [illegible]

[illegible] weakness, and partly to [illegible] those [illegible] year, had [illegible] universal acclamation [illegible]. Second, mixed [illegible] contemporaries so

generously made way for a new fame, so unanimously offered him the seat of honour—and such contemporaries, too—for Tennyson grew, so to say, in a grove of giant oaks, with such men as Carlyle and Huxley and Tyndall and Dickens and Thackeray and FitzGerald for his fellows.

Carlyle's attitude toward him, one almost of affection, is particularly significant, and one cannot do better on this day of reminiscence than recall Carlyle's vivid description of him—one of those masterly characterisations in which Carlyle has never been equalled. "Alfred," he says, "is one of the few British and foreign figures (a not increasing number, I think) who are and remain beautiful to me, a true human soul, or some authentic approximation thereto, to whom your own soul can say, 'Brother!' However, I doubt he will not come [to see me]; he often skips me in these brief visits to town; skips everybody, indeed; being a man solitary and sad, as certain men are, dwelling in an element of gloom, carrying a bit of chaos about him, in short, which he is manufacturing into cosmos; . . . I think he must be under forty, not much under it. One of the finest-looking men in the world. A great shock of rough, dusky hair; bright, laughing, hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive, yet most delicate; of sallow brown complexion, almost Indian looking; clothes cynically loose; free and easy,

[illegible]

[illegible] I have [illegible] your poems: I have read certain [illegible] poems: [illegible] with [illegible] I [illegible] myself. [illegible] I [illegible] you knew what my [illegible] be my miserable English [illegible] back, you would think such [illegible] strange! Truly it is long since in any [illegible] prose, I have felt the pulse

of a real man's heart as I do in this same. A right valiant, true, fighting, victorious heart; strong as a lion's, yet gentle, loving, and full of music: what I call a genuine singer's heart! There are tones as of the nightingale; low murmurs as of wood doves at summer noon; everywhere a noble sound as of the free winds and leafy woods. The sunniest glow of Life dwells in that soul, chequered duly with dark streaks from night and Hades; everywhere one feels as if all were filled with yellow glowing sunlight, some glorious, golden Vapour; from which form after form bodies itself; naturally, golden forms. In one word, there seems to be a note of 'The Eternal Melodies' in this man; for which let all other men be thankful and joyful!"

Such praise of "the thing called English 'poetry'" from Carlyle was indeed an amazing portent, and how inevitably has the rough-barked philosopher, under whose volcanic crust ran such fiery streams of true poetic lava, seized and named the one pervading individual quality of Tennyson's work—that golden quality, which is not merely the *aurea felicitas*, but a veritable atmosphere of "glorious golden vapour," a golden ether naturally embodying itself in "golden forms."

In a familiar passage of "In Memoriam" it will be remembered that the poet, facing "the secular abyss to come," gloomily moralises on the evanescence of modern rhyme and the probable brief duration of his own "mortal lullabies of pain."

Take wings of foresight, lighter than
  The speeding winds shall come,
  And in thy darkness lips are dumb
Beneath the mouldering of a dome.

And if the month sweeps that make
  The darkness of our planet, have
  Thine own shall wither in the vast,
Ere half the life-time of an oak.

Ere these have clothed their branchy bowers
  With thy Maud, thy songs are vain
* * *

Now that more than those "fifty Mays" are passed, it is interesting to ask how does the poet stand the test of his own time limit, what and how much does Tennyson mean to us to-day, fifty-nine years after "In Memoriam," fifty-four years after "Maud," and sixty-seven years after the two classical volumes of 1842?

My own impression is that his fame is securer than ever, and his appeal—after a period of comparative eclipse—if anything, more deeply grounded. There was a time, some twenty years ago, when it was the fashion to depreciate Tennyson as thin, shallow, and pretty-pretty; and probably young people still pass through that stage of development when they say that they have "gone beyond" Tennyson, that he has nothing for them, and so forth. Such

is a part of the history of every classic. Perfect utterance has a way after a while—owing partly to the universal currency its perfection naturally gains—of seeming superficial utterance. Young minds in particular are apt to find the profound in the obscure, and thought in the turmoil of mental fermentation rather than in the distilled crystal of finished thinking and absolute expression. Writers such as Browning and Meredith, therefore, through the very imperfection of their art, by reason of their cryptic and oracular manner of stammering or blurting out their half-realised thoughts, and their general torment of expression, gain credit for more prodigious births of mind, merely on the strength of their agonised parturition. Doubtless, it was the unearthly groanings of the sibyl that gave an importance to her messages seldom to be found in the messages themselves. Because Michelangelo was wont suggestively to leave his creations attached to the nature from which they sprang by some portion of unchiseled rock, the modern sculptor often chooses to give us little else than the natural rock.

Similarly, whenever a poet is able to transmute the crude materials of his philosophising into a lucent mysticism, minds unable to realise that there should be mystery in clearness mistake the profound azure of his thought for shallowness.

Because Tennyson had achieved such a masterly way of saying things, some will have it that he has nothing to say. Then, again, his offense is that his thinking—what there is of it—is in the main hopeful thinking. There are those who call a man a thinker only so long as his thoughts are hopelessly black or hopelessly tangled. Faith is never credited with brains. It is only Despair that is called profound. Yet, as Meredith—no angler in the shallows—has finely said: "Who can really think and not think hopefully." Of course the truth is all the other way. It is despair and pessimism that are the shallow reasoners, and faith that is rooted in the mystic verities of existence, the divining, star-sustained mind that, realising the limitations of sight, believes though it cannot see, and trusts its spiritual instinct before its mortal logic.

Again, Tennyson loses for some judgments by the very amplitude of his nature. He was, in a marked degree, "a full man," the more remarkably so when we consider his artistic sensibilities. Such artistic sensibility and such an all-enfolding scope of human interests have seldom gone together.

One sings a flower, and one a face, and one
  Screens from the world a corner choice and small;
Each toy its little laureate hath, but none
  Sings of the whole—as only he sang All.

To win certain critical suffrages a poet must not be too human; his interests must be narrow and perverse rather than central and sane.

Tennyson, however, was a poet more on Goethe's plan, and into the alembic of his art cast every variety of culture and human experience. His poetic gift was nurtured on the sternest studies, particularly in modern science, the study of astronomy (as with his master, Virgil—"cælique vias et sidera monstrent") having for him a special fascination. It was, doubtless, this strong solution of modern thought in his poetry that helped to win for it such serious attention from his contemporaries, then in the first spiritual throes brought about by the discoveries and speculations of evolutionary science. "Your poetry," said Jowett to him on one occasion, when Tennyson had been fighting shy of one of those strenuous philosophical encounters in which Jowett delighted, "has an element of philosophy more to be considered than any regular philosophy in England. It is almost too much impregnated with philosophy. Yet this to some minds will be its greatest charm." Evidently the robust translator of Plato had not reached the "gone beyond Tennyson" stage!

With this philosophic stability went a universality of human sympathy, by which he identified himself with all the national interests and movements and happenings of his time; so that the dreamy singer

Yet, was it not in these same "Idylls" that

God made himself an awful rose of dawn.

What an endless array of such nobly beautiful lines, such thrilling magic pictures, throng back upon one's memory as we pick up our old copy of Tennyson, and give thanks for that fortunate birthday—August 6, 1809! I suspect that many share FitzGerald's prejudice in favour of the earlier poems, and undoubtedly the purest, most essential, poetry is contained in those 1842 two volumes of masterpieces.

"Mariana," "The Lotus Eaters," "The Miller's Daughter," "Ulysses," "Oenone," "Will Waterproof," "The Lady of Shalott," "Morte d'Arthur," "Love and Duty." What a perfume in the mention these old titles bring with them, and yet surely it was Old Fitz's characteristic crotchet, rather than a serious criticism, that could forego "Maud" and "In Memoriam" and "The Princess." No man can be so devoted to Crabbe as FitzGerald was without severe limitations. No, there is no need to make distinction between Tennyson's work at one period or another. From beginning to end it presents an entirety of achievement, remarkable in its sustained high quality. One could hardly name another poet whose "collected works" are so free from dead spots and dull patches, so alive with various power and enchantment. What magic music,

what golden atmosphere, what fairy vision, what living landscape, what spiritual passion, what noble ardours of sense and soul, what simple tears, what carved and gilded chambers of imagery, lie locked between these old covers. Only Keats may surpass him in beauty, only Coleridge in wizardry, and none but Shakespeare can match him at a simple, heart-broken song.

No, I am afraid, like Jowett, I have not yet "gone beyond Tennyson."

III

FOUR NOTES ON GEORGE MEREDITH

I

MODERN LOVE

THERE is one of those poems especially dear to the lover of poetry, which, in addition to their intrinsic poetic appeal, bring him a romantic sense of esoteric possession. Such a poem once—but, alas! no longer—was FitzGerald's "Rubaiyat." Twenty years ago it was a hushed and perfumed secret of literature, a hidden honeycomb of Hymettus jealously shared among a fortunate few. We made manuscript copies of it at midnight for some dear friend, or tried a quatrain on a promising new acquaintance, like a password. The first edition of "Modern Love" shared with the "Rubaiyat" a similar illicit devotion; but, whereas our FitzGerald shrine has long since been invaded by the Cook's tourist of literature, George Meredith's poem, in spite of much enthusiastic advertising, still remains inviolate, a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. The close-woven

thorn-hedge of its style has proved, and is likely to prove, too forbidding a barrier for the multitude, which casts a curious glance on the minatory inscription over its gate, and passes on to some more accessible pleasaunce. It has been wittily said of George Meredith's poetry, that the poet presents you with admirable nuts, but has neglected to provide nut-crackers. This omission, no doubt, accounts for the fact that the man who loves to keep his poetry to himself and a few friends may still enjoy his "Modern Love," with no fear of picnic parties.

> This is not meat
> For little people or for fools.

This famous warning against trespassers (found only in the first edition of 1862) has a naïve, almost pathetic, look to-day; so accustomed have we become to a noble, nude, and antique treatment of the passion of love, and the tragic dilemmas of marriage in literature. Nowadays, we rather expect our poets to drag their nuptial couches into the street, than are shocked at the hymeneal exposure; and the novelist is no longer forbid to tell the secrets of his domestic prison-house. In 1862, however, public sentiment had several severe and salutary shocks ahead of it. Swinburne's "Poems and Ballads" had yet to come, also Rossetti's "The House

of Life." The whole "fleshly school" of poetry and painting was just beginning its work. Nor had Wagner acclimatised a Prince Consort England to "Laus Veneris." "Modern Love," therefore, would come to a scandalised 1862 with a factitious piquancy as being the earliest matrimonial torture-chamber thrown open to the public. One can imagine its gasp of bewildered prudery, as 1862 opened the rather dry, unpromising-looking volume, and fell upon the masterly first sonnet, in which at once the scene and the theme of the poem are flashed upon us by a few vivid strokes, as of lightning. How audacious even still is the art that fears not to paint so intimate a picture of a tragic human situation, that in other hands could only have been a vulgarly realistic "photographie d'alcove." But how the noble imagery, the elemental metaphoric method, lift it far above any such comparison!

> Like sculptured effigies they might be seen
> Upon their marriage-tomb, the sword between;
> Each wishing for the sword that severs all.

And now to-day, as I hinted, we are fortunate in being able to accept and enjoy the poem, undisquieted by any novelty in its philosophy, or distracted by any sense of its smacking of propaganda. Doubtless, it grew out of a cruel and complex matrimonial situation, and Meredith, doubtless,

wrote out of the bitter anguish and bewilderment and irony of his heart; "bitter constraint and sad occasion dear" made this poem as they have made all the great and lovely things of art; but we no longer care what the particular matrimonial situation was, how far it was autobiographical, nor indeed need we be curious to disentangle the somewhat enigmatic drama of the poem. All that matters to us is the beauty that has flowered out of that stern soil of poignant circumstance; the pattern, the music, that a potent interpretative individuality was able to wring from the tragic travail of his soul. One of Meredith's favourite tests of the poetic nature was—how far it is able to take the rock and rubble, the pain and harshness and bitterness of things, and make them sing. No poet has had a firmer, deeper faith in, so to say, the philosophical significance and value of beauty as a product. His faith in life, in nature—"our only visible friend"—is founded mainly on nature's inexhaustible capacity for transmuting "ancient wrath and wreck" into ever new forms of vital joy and victorious being. His philosophy seems to have been—that so long as a situation, however "tragic," can be made to "sing," we need not despair of life. This is the teaching of all his writing, particularly of his austerely sweet nature poetry; and here in 'Modern Love,' thus early in his life and in the vigorous

young manhood of his powers, we find him applying it to perhaps the most agonising of human dilemmas.

> These two were rapid falcons in a snare,
> Condemn'd to do the flitting of the bat.
> Lovers beneath the singing sky of May,
> They wander'd once; clear as the dew on flowers:
>
> Then each applied to each that fatal knife,
> Deep questioning, which probes to endless dole.
> Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
> When hot for certainties in this our life!

Exactly what these "tragic hints" hint at may sometimes seem a little dark. Meredith is almost tiresomely sibylline, and somewhat overdoes the part of psychologic mystery-man. If only he would consent sometimes to be a little more clear, one feels that he would gain even in profundity. For, after all, one thing in life is very little more mysterious than another; and no ill-mated marriage, however complex, is so beyond the disentangling skill and suggestion of words that we need make Egyptian darkness of it—of the simple facts, I mean, that give rise to the psychologic situation which is the poem's reason for existence.

"Rapid falcons in a snare . . ."—the imagery is picturesque, but with two such souls as we have tragic glimpses of in other moments and attitudes, are we to think of a mistaken marriage as a "snare"

that could so tragically lime and entangle them? Strong souls have always made short work of such snares. So it would hardly seem that "Modern Love" is really motived by that protest against the convention of marriage which is the theme of Meredith's later novels. The sorrow is deeper than that. It is the sorrow of a more ideal experiment, the sorrow of the almost impossibility of a perfect union between man and woman, with the less well [illegible] world on both sides. "Modern" Love [illegible] way, the title jars, as being a little [illegible] contemporary, journalistic. Yet, probably Meredith meant it to stand for a sensitive [illegible] of the passion of love, which perhaps has only [illegible] the keener mysteries of modern [illegible] lays stress on the physical [illegible] more for mysterious spiritual [illegible] and stress on that, and pro-[illegible] extreme, the love of jealous [illegible] medieval love, on the other [illegible] purely spiritual relation, [illegible] the body and the soul [illegible] the soul. Modern love, [illegible] the body because the so-called [illegible] have taught it that body and [illegible] mysteriously, and sacredly, one. I must be [illegible] must be faithful to me—not on the constraint of any external contract, but

because of the chemical adherence and fidelity of the very particles of our flesh, harmoniously destined for magic union one with the other. O if that should fail and by some defect of nature go astray! Then is our tragedy—then we write "Modern Love"; and, having dreamed greatly of a love that believes not only in the immortality of the soul, but in the immortality of matter, we

> Cannot be at peace
> In having Love upon a mortal lease.

—cannot consent to "eat our pot of honey on the grave."

"Modern Love" is the tragedy, in terms of human love, of an idealism which Walter Pater has also symbolised in the story of "Sebastian Van Storck," the tragedy of a temperament haunted by the Infinite and the Perfect, and rendered melancholy by its "fastidious refusal to be or to do any limited thing"; a temperament which cannot accept the apparent conditions of Nature—

> Whose hands bear, here, a seed-bag; there, an urn,

—and play the game of life and love on her terms of "seasons—not eternities." Our "human rose" is too mysteriously fair. Our human joy seems to carry with it too hallowed a sense of immortality.

It is a noble spiritual agony, the last ordeal of that finely tempered clay that will not accept

the senses, except on the terms of the spirit; the last bitter cup, maybe, of initiation of the dreaming indomitable soul, still faithful to its mystic vision of permanent reality, unseduced by pleasure and undismayed even by the face of death.

So, it seems to one, "Modern Love" interprets itself with grander, more cosmic, meanings, as it more surely ascends to its place among the austere fixed stars of English poetry, and as we bring to it hearts and minds less occupied with the mere bloom and song of things, and sadly set to hear more of the strange secret of that bloom and song. The vivid human tableaux, the painfully ironic pictures of the mere human dilemma, are as vivid as ever; the mortal story, so dramatically flashed in tragic hints, grips and agonises us as at our first reading; but the more we read the poem the more we value it for the iron song that sweeps through it, the austere music as of the wind among pines on a starry night, and for its noble beauty as of tragic bronze.

II

THE 1851 POEMS

If it be true, as Mark Pattison held, that an appreciation of Milton is the reward of a lifelong culture, it is none the less true that the appreciation of Meredith is largely a fortunate accident of temper-

ament. The conservative, traditional, academic type of mind reads him, when it reads him at all, with impatience, too much resenting his rebellious impressionism to appreciate and enjoy his virile creativeness, his riotous vitality. For such minds writing is still an art of statement, impassioned maybe, but still statement; with Meredith and writers affiliated to him, writing is an art of suggestion, using for its ends all available means and methods, pressing into its service arts "alien to the artist," and perhaps more and more employing the methods of music and painting. Meredith's writing is essentially modern, the product of an age that produced Wagner. Carlyle and Browning were, of course, the first exponents of the style, and Meredith learned much from both of them. All three stand together as the innovators of a form of expression, almost journalistic in its determination to flash the immediate effect, and Shakespearean in the audacity of its metaphoric method—a method designed to reveal and to embody the last intimacy of insight and sensation. Of course, all three are innovating artists, because they are first innovating thinkers, and their subject-matter no less than their manner is disturbing to minds that feel—and possibly with justice—that art is not concerned with new thinking, but with the ancient verities, and indeed loses its immortal beauty and infinite serenity when it gives ear to

those spiritual and intellectual "storms that rage outside its happy ground." Thought is said to be destructive of beauty, disastrous to fair faces; and there are those who would seem to feel that art is unnaturally employed in the expression of spiritual struggle, or sensual turmoil. Art, they would seem to say, should be static, not dynamic. Poetry for such is the expression of traditional themes in the traditional poetic manner—and they are by no means all wrong.

For, as one grows older—and to grow older is proverbially to grow more conservative—one comes better to understand the academic distaste for writers of the Carlyle-Browning-Meredith school, and grows more to insist that writing shall be *writing*—not talking, however brilliant, not fantastic flashlighting of one's theme, no merely pyrotechnic hints of one's meaning, or musical adumbrations, or the presentation of a verbal palette, however chromatic and bizarre, for a picture. We crave "the little word big with eternity," the one inevitable metaphor, the word worthy of eternal marble, the image as immediate and universal as lightning or the cry of a child; not the innumerable tentative word, however vivid and strange, nor the play of clustering imagery, however Protean or merely harlequinesque.

And the more we demand this expressive finality and universality of literature, the more we realise that

these three writers I have classed together are inspired prophetic journalists, moulders of the spiritual aspiration of their time, rather than enduring voices of the eternal meanings.

It is exceedingly improbable that any one of them will be read, or even understood, a hundred years from now; for they write, so to speak, in the spiritual slang of the day. They have all worked, for the most part, in the perishable medium of contemporary utterance, and on, of course, a far higher plane, must suffer a similar disintegration to that which must inevitably overtake the clay masterpieces of Mr. Kipling.

But the prophet must always, of necessity, be somewhat of a journalist, and the fact of his utterance being more adapted for its immediate purpose than for permanent inspiration, is not to say that the divine fire is not in him, or that he is not a chosen vessel of vast service to his day and generation. It is quite possible to be a great writer, without appealing to posterity; and such writers as I am speaking of will probably reach posterity rather as spiritual influences in the blood of Time than as names upon his lips or living voices in his ears.

So much in concession to the conservative, classic, point of view; yet happy is the man whose enjoyment of *Paradise Lost* does not preclude him from appreciation of *Leaves of Grass*, or whom Words-

worth—with his somewhat anthropomorphic worship of nature—has not disqualified for understanding of Meredith's sterner "reading of earth."

Whether or not there are ears to hear Meredith in the future will depend upon his style, upon the durability of his verbal method; it is to be hoped for the sake of our great-great-grandchildren that they may be able to decipher that "Meredithese," which, though difficult even to us, has a certain thrill of contemporary intimacy that enables us to guess at the spiritual meaning when the writing itself is somewhat verbally dark; for the spiritual and intellectual content of Meredith's writing is of that eternal importance which concerns men in all ages. Man will be as much in need of a practical faith in the invisible powers and the divine significance of the human struggle a thousand years hence as to-day; and, for that reason, it is to be hoped that Meredith's message may still survive, though it will surely need the aid of a glossary. Yet, as we still read Chaucer for pleasure, maybe men a thousand years hence will still painfully translate Meredith for the good of their souls.

Man has many ways of attaining faith. The ways vary with his temperament. But the way most convincing to the modern, or present-day, mind is the way of the fact. Not faith founded on fiction, but faith founded on fact. Such faith it

is that Meredith brings us. The strength of his philosophy lies in his facing all the facts, ugly and beautiful, stern and gentle. Perhaps it is a Manichean world—but Meredith never doubts that God has the best of it. The devil is merely a part of the process. In proof of this, what more do you need than—a rose!

> And O, green bounteous Earth!
> Bacchante Mother! Stern to those
> Who live not in thy heart of mirth;
> Death shall I shrink from, loving thee?
> *Into the breast that gives the rose,*
> *Shall I with shuddering fall?*

A rose—or an automobile. Both would serve alike to Meredith as evidences of the divine energy, ever feeding with celestial fire this mysterious activity we call life.

His novels are lit with this invincible faith in "the upper glories," in spite of their dealing so constantly with sophisticated social types and conditions; even through them Meredith was able to find "the developments and the eternal meanings."

Meredith was a comedian, a social satirist, as well as a spiritual teacher and a poet. It is, indeed, because he was so much a man of this world that we pay such attentive heed to what he has to say about the next. He loves to take life in apparently its most artificial, most unreal, developments, to

[illegible] subtlety or [illegible] "moon" it may [illegible] great forces, and [illegible] mysterious destiny.

[illegible] in novels, is no [illegible] so much concen- [illegible] There are those who [illegible] most lastingly [illegible] who cannot read [illegible] sign of an argument [illegible] When we [illegible] so inspiringly [illegible] darkness [illegible] conclude that [illegible] Meredith's verse, in its [illegible] reading, [illegible] and cryptic [illegible] and the [illegible] rough and prickly [illegible] His verse has a dis- [illegible] and both [illegible] alike in their alternation be- [illegible] and simplicity mystification.

The two volumes of Meredith's verse, recently published by Messrs. Scribners, which are the occasion of these remarks,* bring together the two

* *Poems: Poems and Lyrics of Joy* and *Last Poems*. By George Meredith. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1909.

extremes of Meredith's poetic achievement, in a striking contrast of method, but an equally striking harmony of spiritual attitude. The Meredith of the *Last Poems*, and the Meredith of the *Poems Written in Early Youth* are one and the same, the septuagenarian and the boy of twenty-three, in their jubilant affirmation of the joyous significance of life; though of the two we cannot but feel that it is the boy who is the better poet.

Take this fragment from the *Last Poems:*

> This love of nature that allures to take
> Irregularity for harmony,
> Of larger scope than our hard measures make,
> Cherish it as thy school for when on thee
> The ills of life descend.

Here the old man is still of the same mind with the boy, but the boy said it better when he sang of Nature as "our only visible friend—" when he wrote in his remarkable poem "The Spirit of Earth in Autumn"—

> Great Mother Nature! teach me, like thee,
> To kiss the season and shun regrets.
> And am I more than the mother who bore,
> Mock me not with thy harmony!
> Teach me to blot regrets,
> Great Mother! me inspire
> With faith that forward sets
> But feeds the living fire.

Faith that never frets
For vagueness in the form.
In life, O keep me warm!
For what is human grief?
And what do men desire?
Teach me to feel myself the tree,
And not the withered leaf.
Fixed am I and await the dark to be.

The beauty of "Love in the Valley" needs no further praise. It is one of the most perfect poems in the English tongue. There are some of us who would not exchange it for Keats.

Also, in his early (1851) poems Meredith sang with a simplicity curiously contrasted with his later manner. That young book is full of ballads and lyrics, ballads all swing and bloom, that would surprise those who have only read "The Egoist" or "Diana of the Crossways." Take this ballad of "Beauty Rohtraut," for example:

BEAUTY ROHTRAUT
(From Möricke)

What is the name of King Ringang's daughter?
Rohtraut, Beauty Rohtraut!
And what does she do the livelong day,
Since she dare not knit and spin alway?
O hunting and fishing is ever her play!
And, heigh! that her huntsman I might be!
I'd hunt and fish right merrily!
Be silent, heart!

And it chanced that, after this some time,
    Rohtraut, Beauty Rohtraut,
The boy in the Castle has gained access,
And a horse he has got and a huntsman's dress,
To hunt and to fish with the merry Princess;
And, O! that a king's son I might be!
Beauty Rohtraut I love so tenderly.
        Hush! hush! my heart.

Under a grey old oak they sat,
    Beauty, Beauty Rohtraut!
She laughs: "Why look you so slyly at me?
If you have heart enough, come, kiss me."
Cried the breathless boy, "Kiss thee?"
But he thinks, kind fortune has favored my youth;
And thrice he has kissed Beauty Rohtraut's mouth.
        Down! down! mad heart.

Then slowly and silently they rode home,—
    Rohtraut, Beauty Rohtraut!
The boy was lost in his delight:
"And, wert thou Empress this very night,
I would not heed or feel the blight;
Ye thousand leaves of the wild wood wist
How Beauty Rohtraut's mouth I kiss'd.
        Hush! hush! wild heart."

Or this bitter song which includes in its singing somewhat of that later sorrow which probably made "Modern Love:"

SONG

Fair and false! No dawn will greet
    Thy waking beauty as of old;

[illegible]

[illegible] with a [illegible] Nature. [illegible] was a woman—in the best sense of the word.

understanding her, one of her children. He was as his own Melampus, who:

With love exceeding a simple love of the things
  That glide in grasses and rubble of woody wreck;
Or change their perch on a beat of quivering wings
  From branch to branch, only restful to pipe and peck;
Or, bristled, curl at a touch their snouts in a ball;
  Or cast their web between bramble and thorny hook;
The good physician Melampus, loving them all,
  Among them walked, as a scholar who reads a book.

Wordsworth never wrote:

Lovely are the curves of the white owl sweeping
Wavy in the dusk lit by one large star,

and he never wrote anything more filled with magic of the Nature he loved. But comparisons are proverbial. Wordsworth loved Nature like a preacher. Meredith loved her like a man—or, perhaps, I should say, like the Great God Pan—of whom, I am inclined to think, he was an incarnation. There is the significance of his poetry.

III

GEORGE MEREDITH'S POETRY

What George Meredith meant to young minds some twenty or thirty years ago can hardly, I suppose, be realised by the more sophisticated young minds of to-day—young minds that have been born

and grown up in a spiritual atmosphere largely of George Meredith's creation, and have been nourished on writers who, almost as much as his own books, are emanations of his Jovelike brain.

There were, so to say, many secret societies of literature in those days—freemasonries of serious, enthusiastic youth, more or less affiliated. There was the secret society of Walt Whitman. Shall I ever forget the evening—of which, I confess, I have written before—when two such enthusiastic youths, on tramp through the English countryside, arrived at the drizzling end of the day at the welcome shelter of an inn, and entering a dreary and apparently deserted coffee-room, found, to their intense astonishment, a copy of *Leaves of Grass* lying on a table! Who on earth could it belong to in that outlandish bucolic spot?

As we vociferously gave vent to our delighted surprise, an arm-chair turned around from the fireside at the far end of the room, and a pleasant voice exclaimed, "So you know Whitman!" And then, of course, we sat up till the morning star, in rapt, transfiguring talk. Let us build three tabernacles! Such meetings in those days meant lifelong friendships, as doubtless they still mean to youth with other more recent enthusiasms.

Then, of course, there was the secret society of FitzGerald, the secret society of Pater, the secret

society of Stevenson—of course we always said "R. L. S."

But perhaps the secret society that prided itself most on its mysterious aristocracy was the secret society of George Meredith. To belong to "that acute and honourable minority" that cherished "Richard Feverel" as the Bible of Young Love, and was able, so to speak, to read "The Egoist" in the original, was to feel one's self something like a Rosicrucian of literature. But this was to belong merely to the outer circle.

As in all mysterious orders, there was, in the case of Meredith, an inner circle of illuminati, who looked somewhat patronisingly on those who only knew him by his novels. For them the last word of the Master was in his poetry, in "Modern Love," then in a rare first edition, and in the incomparably rarer "Poems" of 1851. One might hope to possess the first, and then only, edition of "Modern Love," but one could only hope to catch sight of the "Poems" of 1851 in the library of some rich collector friend, who might, if he were particularly human, consent to let us take it home over night.

One phase of our Meredith worship was indignation that so great a master had so long suffered the neglect not only of the public but of the critics, though at the same time we were proud as peacocks to have him all to ourselves. Actually, as we shall

have further occasion to consider. Mr. Meredith had not been so neglected by the critics as in our young championship we supposed. He had been generously recognised by such minds as George Eliot, Swinburne, James Thomson, Mark Pattison, long before we were born; but of that most of us were unaware as we regarded with immeasurable contempt a world that apparently knew him not—though, as I said, inwardly rejoicing that he was our own—a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.

In the volume* entitled *Poems Written in Early Youth*, just published by Messrs. Scribner, the gate of that old enchanted garden is thrown open to the world, so that that mythical person who runs may read. The volume contains the whole of that previous 1851 "Poems," all the poems from "Modern Love" first edition except "Modern Love" itself, and "Scattered Poems" gathered from old magazines and newspapers. In publishing this volume Messrs. Scribner do a notable service to lovers of poetry, for that 1851 volume—although Mr. Meredith in later years, with characteristic

* *Poems Written in Early Youth:* Poems from Modern Love and Scattered Poems. By George Meredith. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

George Meredith: Some Early Appreciations. Selected by Maurice Buxton Forman. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Last Poems. By George Meredith. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

perversity, would not hear it mentioned—contains some of the loveliest poetry he ever wrote. To think that in that dingy, unpromising-looking volume, "Love in the Valley," loveliest of modern love poems, saw the light for the first time! Is there any wonder that the young enthusiasts of whom I have spoken regarded the little book as one of the most precious of all unattainable bibliophilistic things?

And how much more there was in it thrilling with the same pure rapture of young love, a rapture which Meredith more than any other poet makes one feel is a part of nature's own creative rapture—one with the wild rose, one with the soaring lark, one with the tumult of passionate waters, one with the soft thunder of the west wind roaring through the spring woodland.

Take, for example, this song of "Angelic Love":

Angelic love that stoops with heavenly lips
  To meet its earthly mate;
Heroic love that to its sphere's eclipse
  Can dare to join its fate
With one beloved devoted human heart,
And share with it the passion and the smart,
  The undying bliss
  Of its most fleeting kiss;
  The fading grace
  Of its most sweet embrace:—
  Angelic love, heroic love!
  Whose birth can only be above,

Whose wandering must be on earth,
Whose haven where it first had birth!
Love that can part with all but its own worth,
  And joy in every sacrifice
  That beautifies its Paradise
And gently like a golden-fruited vine
With earnest tenderness itself consign,
And creeping up deliriously entwine!
  Its dear delicious arms
    Round the beloved being!
  With fair unfolded charms,
    All-trusting, and all-seeing—
Grape-laden with full bunches of young wine!
While to the panting heart's dry yearning drouth
Buds the rich dewy mouth—
  Tenderly uplifted,
  Like two rose leaves, drifted
Down in a long warm sigh of the sweet South!
Such love, such love is thine,
Such heart is mine
O thou of mortal visions most divine!

I think it would be hardly possible to find a love lyric in English which more rapturously embodies "the love where earth and heaven meet" in the mysterious embrace of soul and sense. In fact in the poetry of no other English poet do I find just this quality of the fusion of so-called earthly passion and spiritual love—a quality which is seen to be Meredith's most characteristic possession from the beginning to the end of his work. We will note

it still in his "last poems" as here in his first, and it makes the noble vitality of all his novels. It flowers in lovely profusion throughout this first book of his, and I would I had space to quote more of the songs scattered here and there among more ambitious poems of great beauty and power; poems on classical themes such as "Daphne," "The Rape of Aurora," and "The Shipwreck of Idomeneus"; poems in which the various myths are revitalised by the same spirit of passionate interpretation which Meredith applied to the whole of life, from star to beetle.

However, I must find room for this tender song:

I cannot lose thee for a day,
  But like a bird with restless wing
My heart will find thee far away,
  And on thy bosom fall and sing.
My nest is here, my rest is here;—
  And in the lull of wind and rain
  Fresh voices make a sweet refrain:
"His rest is there, his nest is there."
With thee the wind and sky are fair,
  But parted, both are strange and dark;
And treacherous the quiet air
  That holds me singing like a lark,
O shield my love, strong arm above!
  Till in the hush of wind and rain,
  Fresh voices make a rich refrain,
"The arm above will shield thy love."

One curious thing to note about these songs,

when one remembers the cryptic and crabbed style of Meredith's later poetry, is their singing quality, their gay, liquid rhythms. Who that only knows his later verse would have thought that Meredith once sang like this:

> Under boughs of breathing May,
> In the mild spring-time I lay,
> Lonely, for I had no love;
> And the sweet birds all sang for pity—
> Cuckoo, lark, and dove.

To turn to the purely nature poems, this young volume contains the superb "South-West Wind in the Woodland," in which the manner, though somewhat simpler, is almost identical with that of the "Songs and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth," written many years after. Here are the same, almost stern, virility of phrase, the same lightning pictures, —a whole world of natural observation compressed into a single line—or even word—the same dare-devil imagery. Who ever wrote of nature like this except Meredith:

> The great South-West drives o'er the earth
> And loosens all his roaring robes
> Behind him, over heath and moor.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Now whirring like an eagle's wing
> Preparing for a wide blue flight;

Now flapping like a sail that tacks
And chides the wet bewildered mast;
Now screaming like an anguished thing
Chased close by some down-breathing beak;
Now wailing like a breathing heart,
That will not wholly break, but hopes
With hope that knows itself in vain;
Now threatening like a storm-charged cloud;
Now cooing like a woodland dove;
Now up again in roar and wrath
High soaring and wide sweeping; now
With sudden fury dashing down
Full force on the awaiting woods.

In a fascinating series of "Pastorals" he sings of nature in her tenderer, more voluptuous moods—and was the voluptuousness, the intoxication, of a ramble through a summer day ever sung before or since like this ?

Summer glows warm on the meadows; then come let us
roam thro' them gaily,
Heedless of heat and the hot-kissing sun, and the fear of
dark freckles.
Never one kiss will he give on a neck or a lily-white
forehead,
Chin, hand, or bosom uncovered, all panting, to take
the chance coolness—
But full sure the fiery pressure leaves seal of espousal.
Heed him not; come, tho' he kiss till the soft little
upper lip loses
Half its pure whiteness, just speck'd where the curve
of the rosy mouth reddens.

Come, let him kiss, let him kiss, and his kisses shall
make thee the sweeter.
Thou art no nun, veiled and vowed; doomed to nourish
a withering pallor !
City exotics beside thee would show like bleached linen
at midday,
Hung upon hedges of eglantine ! Thou in the freedom
of nature,
Full of her beauty and wisdom, gentleness, joyance, and
kindness !
Come, and like bees will we gather the rich golden honey
of noontide,
Deep in the sweet summer meadows border'd by hillside
and river;
Lined with long trenches half hidden, where smell of
white meadow-sweet, sweetest
Blissfully hovers—O sweetest ! but pluck it not, even
in the tenderest
Grasp it will lose breath and wither; like many, not
made for a posy.

See, the sun slopes down to the meadows, where all the
flowers are falling !
Falling unhymned, for the nightingale scarce ever charms
the long twilight:
Mute with the cares of the nest; only known by a
"chuck, chuck," and dovelike
Call of content; but the finch and the linnet and
blackcap pipe loudly.
Round on the western hillside warbles the rich-billed
ouzel,
And the shrill throstle is filling the tangled thickening
copses;

Singing o'er hyacinths hid and most honey'd of flowers, white field-rose.
Joy thus to revel all day in the grass of our own beloved country;
Revel all day, till the lark mounts at eve with his sweet "tirra-lirra,"
Trilling delightfully. See, on the river the slow-rippled surface
Shining; the slow ripple broadens in circles; the bright surface smoothens.
Now it is flat as the leaves of the yet unseen water-lily.
There dart the lives of a day, ever-varying tactics fantastic.
There, by the wet-mirrored osiers, the emerald wing of the kingfisher
Flashes, the fish in his beak! There the dabchick dived, and the motion
Lazily undulates all through the tall standing army of rushes.

There is no need to draw attention to the marvellous particularity of observation of natural things shown in this passage. Grant Allen used to say that Meredith was the most learned naturalist in England, and that, whenever he was in doubt about some bird or flower, he would walk over and consult Meredith; for they were near neighbours.

Now let us pause and think that these remarkable poems were printed, not written, when Meredith was but a lad of 23; and, of course, they must, therefore, have been written, many of them, long before.

Such marvellous precocity of maturity is surely unmatched by the record of any other English poet —not forgetting Keats.

How, one asks, was this marvellous boy received by his contemporaries? Owing to a happy inspiration of Mr. Maurice Buxton Forman, the answer is here to our hand, for in a volume entitled "George Meredith, Some Early Appreciations," Mr. Forman has collected together various contemporary notices of Meredith's books as they from time to time appeared. The volume includes two long, as we say, "important," notices of these 1851 poems, one by William Michael Rossetti and the other by Charles Kingsley. Both treat the young poet with considerable, indeed surprising, seriousness—when one remembers that it was a young poet's first book—and both recognise, in varying degrees, his great gifts. Mr. W. M. Rossetti writes somewhat ponderously and patronisingly, after his wont, and makes an elaborate comparison between young Meredith and Keats. Kingsley also incidentally compares him with Keats. Strange nowadays to see Meredith described as a "Keatsian"!

"The main quality of Mr. Meredith's poems," continues Mr. Rossetti, "is warmth—warmth of emotion, and, to a certain extent, of imagination, like the rich mantling blush on a beautiful face, or a breath glowing upon your cheek. That he is young

will be as unmistakably apparent to the reader as to ourself; on which score various shortcomings and crudities, not less than some excess of this attribute, claim indulgence."

Mr. Rossetti concludes with this patronising passage, which has a pathetically ridiculous look to-day:

> We do not expect ever quite to enrol Mr. Meredith among the demigods or heroes; and we hesitate, for the reason just given, to say that we count on greater things from him; but we shall not cease to look for his renewed appearance with hope, and to hail it with extreme pleasure, so long as he may continue to produce poems equal to the best in this first volume.

How sad and chapfallen old criticism has a way of looking, and how pitiably silly; and it is in many such passages as this that Mr. Forman's book affords one much cruel entertainment.

Charles Kingsley's criticism causes no such smile. Among his many noble qualities Kingsley enjoyed what Swinburne has called "the noble pleasure of praising"; and he was, at the same time, a critic of great insight. In his review of the young Meredith he shows himself a critic of no little foresight, too. It is interesting to note that his review, which was entitled "This Year's Song Crop," and appeared in *Fraser's Magazine*, December, 1851, included reviews, too, of Mrs. Browning's "Casa Guidi Win-

dows" and Thomas Lovell Beddoes's collected poems.

This, we understand [begins Kingsley], is Mr. George Meredith's first appearance in print; if it be so, there is very high promise in the unambitious little volume which he has sent forth as his first-fruits. It is something to have written already some of the most delicious little love poems which we have seen born in England in the last few years, reminding us by their richness and quaintness of tone of Herrick; yet with a depth of thought and feeling which Herrick never reached. Health and sweetness are two qualities which run through all these poems. They are often overloaded—often somewhat clumsy and ill-expressed—often wanting polish and finish; but they are all genuine, all melodiously conceived, if not always melodiously executed.

Kingsley then proceeds to quote two songs, one of which I quoted above, "I Cannot Lose Thee for a Day." Continuing, he says: "In Mr. Meredith's Pastorals, too, there is a great deal of sweet, wholesome writing, more like real pastorals than those of any young poet whom we have had for many a year."

So one sees that Meredith fared far better with his first volume than most youngsters.

It would be most entertaining to follow Buxton Forman through his other "retrospective views";

to quote George Eliot's enthusiastic praise of "The Shaving of Shagpat," to tell what *The London Times* of the morning of October 14, 1859, had to say of "Richard Feverel," or *The Saturday Review* of "Evan Harrington," or *The Morning Post* of "Rhoda Fleming"; but we must forego these delights. The reader must buy the book for himself and take a curious object-lesson in the making of fame. Particularly would I draw his attention to the masculine reviews of James Thomson, the tragic poet of "The City of Dreadful Night," one of the earliest and most militant Meredithians.

And now I take in my hand the little sheaf of "Last Poems," the gleanings from so majestic a harvest. I said that we should find in these last poems the same indomitable rapture as in the first, and here it is, no whit chilled by the years; and here still is the old bloom, the old, stalwart, passionate trust in the strong, sweet earth, the old valiant faith in "the upper glories," and the old sure reliance that the two are one.

You seek in vain here for the pathos or palsy of age. No, it was an old man wrote this, a very old man, this of "The Wild Rose":

> High climbs June's wild rose,
> Her bush all blooms in a swarm,
> And swift from the bud she blows,

In a day when the wooer is warm;
Frank to receive and give,
Her bosom is open to bee and sun;
Pride she has none,
Nor shame she knows;
Happy to live.

It was an old man who wrote this:

Open horizons round,
O mounting mind, to scenes unsung,
Wherein shall walk a lusty Time;
Our earth is young;
Of measure without bound;
Infinite are the heights to climb,
The depths to sound.

The three great spiritual poets of the Victorian era—Tennyson, Browning, and Meredith—all died very old men, and each of them died valiantly singing the song of victorious life—a thought to make a younger generation of pessimists ashamed of itself.

Of the three the faith of Meredith is, for me, the most convincing, for it was drawn from no formal creed or philosophy, and it was softened by no suspicion of sentimental optimism. He drew it direct from nature's heart—nature, which he has finely called "our only visible friend." Here, in his last words to us, he emphasises the faith in which he lived his life, a faith that fills all his work with a divine energy and a shining courage:

This love of nature, that allows to take
Irregularity for harmony,
Of larger scope than our hard measures make,
Cherish it as thy school for when on thee
The ills of life descend.

It was an iron faith, but a true faith can be made of no other metal.

IV

GEORGE MEREDITH: IN MEMORIAM

As I walked through the spring woods this morning I saw the wild white cherry in blossom, and I said to myself, "The wild white cherry blooms again—and Meredith died yesterday." Readers of Meredith's poetry—all too few—will know what I meant, will remember that for him the wild white cherry was the symbol of spiritual resurrection, and will recall with what striking effect he used it in that cryptic but sternly bracing poem, "A Faith on Trial." In that poem he tells how, stricken to earth with a great grief that had seemed to take away all his faith in life and God and nature, he walked up through the spring woodland with aching heart, and there, suddenly, he came upon a wild white cherry which had fought its way through the rocks, and, in spite of every repressive force against it held up its banner of irrepressible blossom. In this wild white cherry Mere-

dith saw a symbol of the indomitable endurance and immortal energy of the human spirit, a glimpse of the divine hope that, as well as tears, dwells in all mortal things. And he went down the hill again, with his heart comforted and his faith in life restored. Meredith's poems, of all his writings, were nearest to his heart, and the strange, though not entirely unaccountable, neglect of them was the only point where his lordly philosophic indifference to public opinion was liable to break down.

Perhaps I may be permitted a personal reminiscence in illustration of this. The incident seems amusing to me now, but then it seemed only filled with the blushes of embarrassment; for I was very young, and had gone with awe and adoration to spend a day or two, as it seemed to me, on Parnassus Hill, at Meredith's country home at Dorking, in Surrey. My visit had been one long dream of sitting at the feet of the master, whom above all I worshipped, a visit almost speechless on my part, but on his filled with that wonderful talk for which he was, of course, famous. He had taken me up to the little châlet, on the hillside above his house, where he did his writing, and had actually read to me, with his own voice, from his own manuscript, chapters from *The Amazing Marriage*, which he was then writing. Think of it! I can hardly think of it to-day without tears. When he had finished reading,

I timidly asked him, for I was a great collector in those days, if he would give me a page of his manuscript, any manuscript. He assented with royal geniality. Of course his manuscripts meant nothing to him. And then we went down the hill to the house for luncheon, at which one or two other guests were present. My visit had come to an end, and my train left soon after luncheon, and all the time my mind was full of my promised manuscript and anxiety to secure it before I went. So, toward the end of the meal, I ventured to remind Mr. Meredith of his promise. But, O of all flat-footed, unfortunate speeches, this was the way I asked him:

"Of course, Mr. Meredith," I said, "I don't ask for anything important. If I might only have a little poem—" Unhappy boy! The words were scarcely out of my mouth when Meredith turned on me with a look of Olympian scorn, which well became that grand manner at all times his, and poured upon my unlucky head a tirade of that fanatstic sarcasm of which he was past master. I cannot reproduce it here, for it was aerily elaborate as his conversational manner was, but the text on which he mercilessly fantasticated was:

"O, I see! You don't want anything important —nothing important—only one of my poems. Ah!" And then he began, utterly indifferent to my embarrassment, wilfully cruel, and ignoring articles of

mine on his poetry which, that very day, he had praised—articles boyish enough, but filled at least with enthusiastic appreciation. The other guests were sorry for me, and begged for mercy. I tried to explain that I had meant that I did not expect the manuscript of "Richard Feverel" or "The Egoist"; but it was all to no purpose. I never got my manuscript.

Yet one cannot blame Meredith for being testy about the neglect of his poetry. That "Modern Love" should have remained in a forgotten first edition for over twenty years is one of the inscrutable mysteries of literary appreciation. Of course the reason that will be offered for its neglect, and for the neglect of Meredith's other poetry, is that the expression is often obscure and sibylline—which is true, but no more true than it is of Browning; and there is much of Meredith's poetry that is limpid clear. It would be hard to find another poem more filled with fragrant nature pictures and more haunting music than "Love in the Valley," which is simplicity itself. Nor is there in English any nature poetry with quite the same quality at once of wood magic and authentic earthiness—the sweet peaty smell of earth, berries, and bearded mosses and all the aromatic rough underbrush of things. And yet you may meet many a lover of poetry before you meet one who knows "The Woods of Wester-

main" or the other "Songs and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth."

The final significance of Meredith's writings, whether poetry or prose, is that he was a great poet-philosopher who believed in the spiritual nature of the material universe—by no means an optimist in the cheap sense; but a stern, joyous thinker whose faith held every possible doubt in solution, one who flinched at no fact, and one who feared no ghost. And this philosophy of his he expressed by means of a versatile apparatus of gifts which belonged to no other man of his time. He could express it through a divine love story such as "Richard Feverel," or through a sardonic comedy such as "The Egoist," or through a story of stern action such as "Vittoria." For sheer wit, of course, there is no novelist in English that approaches him, and the debt of his younger contemporaries to him for inspiration, such contemporaries as Stevenson and Oscar Wilde, is beyond calculation. He was the secret sustaining energy behind most modern English thinking, and the greatest spiritual force of our time. As for Mr. Henry James, he may literally be said to have sprung, Minerva-like, from the brain of George Meredith.

Swinburne, only a few days ago, and now Meredith! All the great Victorians gone. It makes the world seem homeless, and, so to say, shabby—for, to

some of us at least, it was inspiring to feel that we were living in the same world with great men. There were giants, too, in our days. But almost every kind of giant has gone, and the world seems to grow smaller every minute. When Björnson and Tolstoy go, there won't be a great man left in the world.

Well, George Meredith, good-bye. I am going to walk up the hill again and look at the wild white cherry in bloom. Perhaps, too, I may catch a glimpse of Lucy and Richard by the river.

IV

RE-READING HAWTHORNE

IT will be a hundred years ago this fourth of July since Nathaniel Hawthorne was born at 27 Union Street, Salem, Massachusetts; and on May 18, 1864, he saw the sun set for the last time. Such a lapse of years between his day and ours fairly entitles us, perhaps, to regard ourselves as that "posterity" with whose judgment a writer's fame is supposed to rest. Forty years is the copyright life of a book, but, alas! the books are few indeed that do not expire before their copyrights. The present is an appropriate moment to ask: how is it with Hawthorne? How do his books wear? What is his significance in literature? Most of us, I suppose, read his works when we were young,—too young, perhaps, to appreciate the fineness of his art,—but, now that we are not quite so young, how do his books bear reading again, and with what permanence of appeal do they support his fame? To me, fresh from such re-reading, only one answer seems possible, the answer of gratitude for a classic. The re-affirmation of a classic in a changing world is no small matter to

those for whom literature is no insignificant part of life. When so much plays us false, after all it is something to know that our faith in *The Scarlet Letter* was not one of the many illusions. Yes! Hawthorne, it is good to find, is one of the realities, and likely to remain one of the permanent sources of human pleasure.

Pleasure! Hawthorne came of a stock for which such a statement would seem more of an indictment than a credential. Human pleasure! What would the first American Hathorne, a younger son of a Wiltshire family, emigrating to Massachusetts in 1630, Major William Hathorne [it was Nathaniel who first slipped in the "w"], what would he, stern persecutor of Quakers, have said of a descendant so trivially distinguished? And his son John, even more grimly religious, and still gloomily remembered as a burner of witches, how sternly would he have disowned so frivolous an immortality! Yet, so cynical is Time, these two most conspicuous figures in the Hawthorne pedigree would long since have been forgotten, had it not been for the fact that their blood appears to have supplied the most potent ingredient of that dark decoction which ran in the veins of their fanciful descendant. Indeed, the cases are few in which a genius so essentially mysterious can superficially be traced to his origin, or so plainly illustrates the theory

of transmutation of ancestors. If the Hawthorne stock was ever to blossom out into literature, the books of Nathaniel Hawthorne were certainly its logical expression. It is strange to note how the shadows of these far-away ancestors could suddenly, after an interval of obscure sea captains, throw so picturesque a gloom over so distant a descendant. Yet the fate of Nathaniel's father, a sea captain, who died of yellow fever at Surinam, when Nathaniel was four years old, undoubtedly contributed to that shadow—if only indirectly through the grief of his mother, who shut herself away from society for thirty years, a retirement which naturally had its effect upon the solitary temperament of her son. Salem, too, was a sad, decaying old town, and thus the child grew up among hushed whispers and shadows. As a mere boy his melancholy early expressed itself in the invention of weird stories, which he always ended with the words, "And I'm never coming back again"; and his favourite line, before he could talk plainly, was "Stand back, my lord, and let the coffin pass." So, characteristically, the child was father to the man. Lowell has deftly described him as "a November nature with a name of May"; and Hawthorne himself, almost painfully conscious of the gloomy cast of his genius, once exclaimed, "I wish God had given me the faculty of writing a sunshiny book."

Perhaps the involuntary nature of genius was never more significantly illustrated than in the case of this man, who, while himself living a simple and innocent life, himself gentle, and, save for that harmless meditative melancholy, entirely free from those dark ancestral attributes of which I have spoken, yet found his artistic faculty responsive only to the sinister and bizarre in human material. A gift has seldom seemed so detached from the personality of its possessor, so sheerly a function of independent operation; for a conscience could hardly be freer than Nathaniel Hawthorne's, yet his most successful stories are all concerned with the burden of sin and the shadow of doom. This was, of course, the bequest of ancestors grimly preoccupied with moral questions—questions which, in the case of their descendant, came to have a purely artistic value. One has only to read the exquisitely tranquil preface to *Mosses from an Old Manse* to realise how distinct was the haunted dream-life of his books from the placid tenor of his actual days.

In short, of all American writers, Hawthorne is the literary artist pure and simple, the greatest literary artist—not forgetting Poe—that America has produced. No doubt it is for this reason that Hawthorne was so long, as he himself says in the preface to *Twice-told Tales*, "the obscurest man of letters in America." As with his own

"Artist of the Beautiful," his gift was too fine to attract the general reader, till at length in *The Scarlet Letter* he compelled his attention by the dramatic use of a peculiarly American subject. Here one may recognise the fact that one of Hawthorne's claims upon the appreciation of his countrymen is that he is unquestionably an indigenous product, a genuine American writer. "Out of the soil of New England he sprang," says Henry James, in a brilliant study of him which would be perfect were it not for a certain tone of superiority, somewhat too English in its accent for one American writer to use toward a compatriot so much greater than himself; "in a crevice of that immitigable granite he sprouted and bloomed. Half of the interest that he possesses for an American reader with any turn for analysis must reside in his latent New England savour."

This, I think, is to lay too much stress upon, as well as to exaggerate, the local flavour in Hawthorne; but it is certain, nevertheless, that, while, like all other true artists, he belongs to the whole world, America has the right to say that no other country could have produced him. Most other American writers might just as well have been born in England. There is, for example, nothing peculiarly American about Washington Irving, or Longfellow. But Hawthorne is as subtly Ameri-

can in quality as, say, Thackeray is English. Both are masters of English style. Yet one is unmistakably American.

Hawthorne's style, at its best, is one of the most perfect media employed by any writer using the English language. Dealing, as it usually does, with an immaterial subject-matter, with dream-like impressions, and fantastic products of the imagination, it is concrete without being opaque,—luminously concrete, one might say. No other writer that I know of has the power of making his fancies visible and tangible without impairing their delicate immateriality. If any writer can put the rainbow into words, and yet leave it a rainbow, surely that writer is Hawthorne.

Most writers having to treat such material as the favourite material of Hawthorne would fall back upon the impressionistic method, and hint, rather than embody,—and I am not for a moment depreciating the value of that method. At the same time, it cannot be denied that of the two methods it is the easier,—because to suggest is so much easier than to describe, and no little impressionism is simply clever evasion of visual responsibility. Hawthorne, however, is no such trickster. No matter how subtle or volatile is the matter to be expressed, his imagination is so patiently observant, and his literary skill so answerable to his imagination,

that he is able really to write so close to the spiritual fact as to leave nothing to be done by the reader—except to read. Often, as one reads him, and anticipates some approaching matter peculiarly fine and difficult, he wonders how the author can possibly put this into concrete words.

Yet, again, it is not a little interesting, even surprising, to note how inaffectual is this delicately powerful artistic equipment when employed upon material which, so to say, has not been ancestrally prepared for its use. There are whole stretches of Hawthorne not merely flat and uninspired, but positively amateurish. In this respect he reminds one of Wordsworth, who, at one moment, is a master, and the next—an absurdity. The artist's dependence upon his material was for a while scouted by a certain school of critics, but every real artist gives it proof. One might almost say that a man's artistic material is no less born with him than his artistic gift. No amount of conscious study will take the place of that natal, and prenatal, relation to certain corners and aspects of the world to the appreciation and expression of which an artist is destined. Just as some painters seem born, like Millet, to paint the peasantry, and some, like Vandyke, to paint the portraits of kings, others, again, like Verestchagin, to paint war, or, like Turner, to paint the sky, just as surely was Haw-

thorne predestined to write of New England witches, and New England cases of conscience, and to embody his psychological and moral fancies.

I wish I had the space to make an analysis of his writings with this thought in mind, for such an analysis would provide a remarkable object-lesson in the psychology of the artist. As, however, it is part of my business here to say why Hawthorne is still read, and what of his is best worth reading, an attempt to fulfil this task will amount to very much the same thing. To this end let us run through the list of his books. They follow each other in this order:—

"Twice-told Tales."
"Mosses from an Old Manse."
"The Scarlet Letter."
"The House of the Seven Gables."
"A Wonder Book for Boys and Girls."
"The Blithedale Romance."
"The Snow Image, and Other Twice-told Tales."
"English Note-books."
"Italian Note-books."
"The Marble Faun."
"Septimius Felton."—Unfinished.
"The Dolliver Romance."—Unfinished.

Now, of these, *Twice-told Tales*, *Mosses from an Old Manse*, and *The Snow Image, and Other Twice-told Tales* might as well, so to speak, have been bound in the same volume. They are all

made up of the same successes and the same failures. Almost always you will find that the successes grow in the shadow, and are concerned with the darker side of the spiritual drama, being fantasies and allegories of ambitious or troubled souls. Mingled with them are pleasant essays, and gracious moralities (perhaps a little childish)—such, say, as *A Rill from the Town Pump*, *The Great Carbuncle*, and *The Seven Vagabonds;* also, to my thinking, much over-rated legends of American history, such as *Legends of the Province House.* But these you read merely because the pen that wrote them was seldom capable of being continuously dull on any theme. Indeed, with the exception of three or four masterpieces, these three books must be regarded either as experiments or repetitions. These masterpieces, in my opinion, are:—

"Dr. Heidegger's Experiment."
"Young Goodman Brown."
"Rappaccini's Daughter."
"Feathertop."
"Roger Malvin's Burial."
"The Artist of the Beautiful."

Perhaps, from old association, one may add *The Great Stone Face.* As for *The Snow Image*, I must confess that it seems but a childish performance to-day, when the art of writing fancies for children has reached so scientific a

development. Possibly *The Wonder Book* still holds its place in the nursery, but here one would need the more competent opinion of a child.

But the six masterpieces! If Hawthorne had written nothing else but these he would have triumphantly immortalised himself as an artist of the mysterious.

Compare him with Poe in this respect, and note how mechanically inventive are the best of Poe's stories compared with the essential mystery of Hawthorne's imaginations. With all their detective brilliancy, there is no story of Poe's to be compared with *Rappaccini's Daughter*, or even *Young Goodman Brown*—an even more difficult, if less original, achievement.

However, one must not forget one more masterpiece of a different kind before we pass on to the big books,—that introduction to the *Mosses from an Old Manse* to which I have before made reference. Here is a familiar essay of which Lamb himself might have been proud—the finest creative essay, I venture to think, in American literature. The two really great books to which the small masterpieces led up are, of course, *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*. You will often hear expressed what to me is a quite incomprehensible opinion—that *The Marble Faun* is Hawthorne's real master-

piece. I have tried to read the book several times, and the result of each experiment has been the same —I have felt that it is the accidentally celebrated monument of what Hawthorne could not do. One might call it "Hawthorne's Folly," so conspicuous is its failure. Still it is a failure which corroborates Hawthorne's real success, and is, therefore, critically important. The reason of its popular acceptance is obvious enough. Hawthorne's fame was of slow growth. The world at large was only awakening to the fact of his existence when he resigned his post as American consul at Liverpool, and on his way home spent some months of holiday in Italy,—a country whose art, at all events, his notebooks display him as temperamentally incapable of appreciating. In our day certain writers make a clever pretense of assimilating local colour. It matters little in what climate, or among what people, they set their scene. Being men of a strolling talent, as distinct from men of a rooted genius, they are able to give us a passable imitation of the real thing. Hawthorne was different. Few men of genius have been possessed of so little talent. He could no more be what he was not, or write what nature had not meant him to write, than the nightshade can impersonate the cowslip. He seemed congenitally incapable of development and even of assimilation; and he himself, as you will find if

you read his letters and note-books, was the first to be aware of this limitation. Limitation! I am afraid I used the word a little carelessly,—for surely it is not limitation which roots an artist to his proper material, and denies him the cheap and flashy use of a tourist's observation.

Hawthorne in Italy was the most simple-minded of American tourists, and that he should have dared to base and background an important book on so superficial an acquaintance with Italy only shows how innocent he was of his own powers. The "public," however, knowing and caring nothing for these things, chanced to get hold of his name about this time, and Italy being always a subject so vital and so fragrant that it hardly matters who makes use of it, it is easy to understand why even to-day the first word one hears about Hawthorne is—*The Marble Faun!*

Now my first word to a reader approaching Hawthorne is,—do not read *The Marble Faun.* Not only will it weary you, but it will also give you an unfair impression of a great master. When you have read the real Hawthorne, then, if you care, you may read *The Marble Faun* as a study in —what even genius cannot do.

But the moment we turn to the really great books—to *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*—the sense of mastery is so

immediate that one can hardly believe that here is the same hand that wrote *The Marble Faun.* How sure is the touch from the first word, how subtly pervasive the atmosphere, and how dramatically visualised is the whole moral tragedy in either case, and not that merely, but also every physical detail, such as the pillory on which Hester stood that day with the sun beating on the bright letter blazing upon her bosom, and on which Dimmesdale and she and little Pearl stood that night in the moonlight! Similarly, the old house of the seven gables is made so real to us, so impressively haunted with doom, that actually it itself, so to say, is felt to be the chief tragic presence in the story, and the lives lived in the gloom mere passing shadows of hardly more importance than the bats and owls roosting generation after generation among its shingles. The lives come and go, but the old house stands like a Greek fate. And another surprise of this remarkable art is that, with its massive breadth and impressive (one might almost say oppressive) outlines, it is at the same time an art of innumerable fine touches, fine shades, and subtle secondary meanings. On the face of the picture there is the grim, living drama of human fate, so simple as almost to seem crude, but as one looks into the picture how alive it becomes with interior spiritual significance, how it gleams and whispers with mysterious hints and

translunary fancies, some necromantic charm of "woven paces and of waving hands."

Little Pearl, so real and yet so unrea', is a symbol of that elusive quality in Hawthorne's art which perhaps above all others makes him Hawthorne. If one had space to analyse the chapter of *The Scarlet Letter* devoted to Pearl,—Chapter VI.,—he would come as near to Hawthorne's secret as criticism is capable of reaching. Indeed, his half-realistic, half-allegoric, method is nowhere else so skilfully illustrated as in his treatment of this little elfish love-child of an irregular union. Perhaps one could not do better, by way of illustrating his method in a small compass, than quote a page from this chapter:—

Pearl's aspect was imbued with a spell of infinite variety; in this one child there were many children, comprehending the full scope between the wild-flower prettiness of a peasant-baby, or the pomp, in little, of an infant princess. Throughout all, however, there was a trait of passion, a certain depth of hue, which she never lost; and if, in any of her changes, she had grown fainter or paler, she would have ceased to be herself—it would have been no longer Pearl!

This outward mutability indicated and did not more than fairly express the various properties of her inner life. Her nature appeared to possess depth, too, as well as variety; but—or else Hester's fears deceived her—it lacked reference and adapta-

tion to the world into which she was born. The child could not be made amenable to rules. In giving her existence, a great law had been broken; and the result was a being whose elements were, perhaps, beautiful and brilliant, but all in disorder; or with an order peculiar to themselves, amidst which the point of variety and arrangement was difficult or impossible to be discovered. Hester could only account for the child's character—and even then most vaguely and imperfectly—by recalling what she herself had been, during that momentous period while Pearl was imbibing her soul from the spiritual world, and her bodily frame from its material of earth. The mother's impassioned state had been the medium through which were transmitted to the unborn infant the rays of its moral life; and, however white and clear originally, they had taken the deep stains of crimson and gold, the fiery luster, the black shadow, and the untempered light of the intervening substance. Above all, the warfare of Hester's spirit, at that epoch, was perpetuated in Pearl. She could recognise her wild, desperate, defiant mood, the flightiness of her temper, and even some of the very cloud-shapes of gloom and despondency that had brooded in her heart. They were now illuminated by the morning radiance of a young child's disposition, but later in the day of earthly existence might be prolific of the storm and whirlwind.

The thought, and, so to say, the sure-footed style of this passage are peculiarly characteristic of Hawthorne. Pearl's whole nature is airy meta-

physic matter, yet Hawthorne is able to embody her with absolute concreteness, without for a moment robbing her of her volatile mystery: such a certitude of vision had his imagination when working on its proper material, and so faultlessly responsive was his literary gift to his imaginative vision. I will not deny that his style sometimes seems to endow his fancies with a too ponderable visibility, as if a man should blow solid bubbles, or so picture the rainbow as to make it almost appear an arch of coloured marble. But to allow this is but to allow to Hawthorne, as to any other artist, the defect of his quality. Hawthorne's style, while uncommonly "central" and free from affectation, was also, as his note-books show, the product of considerable practice in the use of words. Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that the whole interest of his note-books lies in their being exercise books for his gift of expression. There is so much in them of unimportant observation, observation so impersonal, so lacking either in personal or general interest, that they are to be explained on no other ground than that of a man using his pen for mere exercise upon anything it came across, however trivial.

This theory of the note-books, however, may be a little too euphemistic, too generously adapted to cover what really does seem to have been a

certain poverty and narrowness in Hawthorne's intellectual interest,—a certain New England barrenness of the soil. His was certainly not a rich mind, exuberantly creative. On the contrary, he made use of his inspiration to the uttermost farthing, and the manner in which his gift died before him, of premature decay,—as illustrated by his pathetic realisation of his inability to finish *The Dolliver Romance* or *Septimius Felton*,—seems to point to a constitutional anæmia in his nature. When, after repeated attempts, *The Dolliver Romance* fell unfinished from his hands, he wrote thus to his publisher, Mr. Fields: "I hardly know what to say to the public about this abortive romance, though I know pretty well what the case will be. I shall never finish it. Yet it is not quite pleasant for an author to announce himself, or to be announced as finally broken down as to his literary faculty. . . . I cannot finish it unless a great change comes over me, and, if I make too great an effort to do so, it will be my death; not that I should care much for that, if I could fight the battle through and win it, thus ending a life of much smoulder and a scanty fire in a blaze of glory. But I should smother myself in mud of my own making. . . ."

The decay of his literary gift seemed to be curiously parallel with the almost incomprehensible fading away of his physical life. There seemed

nothing really the matter with him—only a sure sinking of the fires of life. It was as if, after using up the iron of his New England blood in his masterpieces, the chill of it was all that was left in his veins. "Some island in the Gulf Stream" had been one of his suggestions, as the chill grew chillier. In warmer latitudes, perhaps, the fires of life would have revived—but he did not attempt to visit them. He went, instead, to the White Mountains, arriving at Plymouth on May 18th, and dying the following night. He lies at Concord, perhaps the chief of the many immortals whose memories make that little town what one might call the Westminster Abbey of America.

V

A NOTE ON MAURICE HEWLETT

(*A propos* "The Stooping Lady")

IN this new book Mr. Hewlett carries his strangely brilliant art of literary impersonation to the highest point of his achievement. A peculiar skill seems to have been developed among writers during the last twenty years—that of writing in the manner of some master, not merely with mimetic cleverness, but with genuine creative power. We have poets who write so like Wordsworth and Milton that one can hardly differentiate them from their masters; and yet—for this is my point—they are no mere imitators, but original poets, choosing, it would seem, some old mask of immortality through which to express themselves. In a different way than that of Guy de Maupassant they have chosen to suppress themselves, or rather, I should say, that, whereas de Maupassant strove to suppress, to eliminate himself, their method is that of disguise. In some respects they remind one of the hermit crab, who

annexes some beautiful ready-made house instead of making one for himself. But then they annex it so brilliantly, with such delightful consequences for the reader, that not only is there no ground for complaint, but the reader almost forgets that the house does not really belong to them, and that they are merely entertaining tenants on a short lease.

Mr. Maurice Hewlett, in a long series of fascinating books, has inhabited many styles. We are all familiar with his Malory-cum-Morris-cum-Meredith style. In *The Forest Lovers* it was mainly Malory-cum-Morris, in *Richard Yea-and-Nay* it was Meredith-cum-Mediævalism, a strange hybrid of style, indeed, through which to express so powerfully personal an imagination. Then, of course, we have the Italianate quattrocento style of *Earthwork Out of Tuscany* and *Little Novels of Italy*—more nearly personal in manner than any of his writings, with a hint of Meredith, however, always in the air. Now, in *The Stooping Lady*, we have Mr. Hewlett writing sheer Meredith, naked and unashamed—one might almost say rewriting *Diana of the Crossways*. And yet the book is his own, one of the most brilliant pieces of work done in our time, with a heroine I personally would not exchange for Diana. What pictures, what character drawing, what atmosphere, what a tense story, and, again,

what a heroine, and yet all done in another man's medium, all written in another man's words—no, hardly that, but certainly in another man's style.

In anyone concerned with the manner as well as the matter of writing this odd characteristic or gift of Mr. Hewlett's must provoke no little interest. Why should a man with Mr. Hewlett's rare, even astonishing, endowment of personal gifts choose to write, not impersonally—for it is not that—but under, so to say, the aliases of so many other personalities? This protean quality makes Mr. Hewlett somewhat of a contemporary literary phenomenon, as it is surely a unique form of literary self-sacrifice. If the style is the man, one is obliged to ask in Mr. Hewlett's case—Whose style?

I do not propose to retell a story which Mr. Hewlett has told so well; but these opening sentences will at once state the "argument" and afford a good illustration of the Meredithism of Mr. Hewlett's manner:

On the 21st of January, 1809, Miss Hermia Mary Chambre and her brother, Ensign Richard—as the Countess of Morfa's chariot brought them for the first time to Caryll House, St. James's, within those great gates, into that gravelled court where the statue of a late Earl stood and admonished London—on this day, and on the very threshold of this Sanctuary of the Constitution, Miss Chambre, I say, and her brother, a beautiful and healthy girl of twenty and

a fine young man of rather less, were witnesses to a disagreeable incident, a vulgar brawl and scuffle, calling for the interference of the police.

Orphans, Irish by a deplorable father's side, and therefore in crying need of grace, this was the grace they got. Recalled within the pale of Family—that Family which their poor mother had forsworn—they were to see Family put to the blush. A rout of satyrs, a boors' comedy, in which an incensed young giant of the lower classes was hero and two tipsy gentlemen the sport of his heroics; in which Jacob Jacobs, elderly, gold-laced guardian of the gates, was choragus; in which footmen in canary yellow and powder, a groom of the chambers, a butler hovering for the carriage, took their cues from him, and wailed, lifted their eyes to Heaven, wagged their polls, called for constables, as he guided them with agitated hands—what a welcome to Britain! Beyond them and around them—with a ring scrupulously kept for the "turn-up"—surged and thundered the mob, intent only on the play, with raucous cries directed solely to that, with eyes afire for the rules of the great game. "Time! Time!" "Let my lord get his wind—Now they're at it—a mill, a mill!—ding-dong!" "What, you'll rush it, my lord? By God, that's stopped him!" "Six to one on the butcher—I lay." "Keep the ring, gentlemen, please—fobbed him fairly—gone to grass!" It was indeed at this crowning moment, when one gentleman lay bleeding on his back, and the other, slighter gentleman, "spitfiring like a tomcat," it was afterward averred, struggled fruitlessly to escape the enemy's grasp of his coat-collar

—that the family chariot of the Morfas loomed heavily at the far end of Cleveland Row and, advancing, displayed to the eyes of our young lady and her brother one of the sights of London—as they no doubt supposed it. Hardly seeing what, certainly, was not fit to be seen, no doubt for a second of time those startled eyes of hers gazed upon the havoc, and upon the flushed young Saxon, bareheaded and fair-headed, the hero of it—a noticeable young man performing noticeable feats with gentlemen. No doubt but that she, too, was by him gazed upon in her turn, and that that second of time seemed by seconds too long. These encounters of the eyes stay by one, though in this case there were sights to come. Within the gates lay another—a dead horse, weltering from the issue of a terrible wound; whereat indeed the bright-eyed Miss Chambre shrieked and clung to her brother, and he, after one sagacious look, said, "Staked, Hermy," and then, "Poor devil. So that was the meaning of it."

And thus 1809, thus London, thus England and Caryll House arrayed themselves to greet two young Carylls (by the mother's side) very newly from Ireland. A mob at the Gates! A dead and mangled horse within the Precincts! A tipsy gentleman scruffed by a butcher's man! The scene was significant. As the French would say—1809!

The story is told throughout in this manner—a delightful story, an enthralling heroine. No Meredithian device is forgotten. We have Pink Mor-

daunt, with his anecdotes: "Pink Mordaunt he is in all the Memoirs." It was an age of diaries and diarists, as the first chapter of *Diana of the Crossways* reminds us. We have Mr. Meredith's inevitable great newspaper man, an inky, undertakerly, obsequious person, editing his paper in the interests of the Government, and therefore flatteringly tolerated in great houses; we have delightful Meredithian names, such as Lord Rodono, Mervyn Touchett, Gell-Gell, Lord Drillstone—Mr. Hewlett even ventures to lay hands on the name of "Carinthia" for one of his ladies; and we have in the Hon. Captain Ranald the inevitable Meredithian "Redworth," the quiet man who waits till the heroine has got over—the hero.

The hero, of course, is the young flaxen-haired Saxon, David Vernour, butcher—and, as it soon transpires, reform orator and politician. Captain Ranald and other reform gentlemen of the time are friends of his, and there is no doubt that he was a fine fellow, a "nature's gentleman," very liable to catch the eye and heart of a rebellious young noble lady, whose father had been an Irish soldier eloquently "Marseillaise," and whose mother, running away from the same embattled, escutcheoned home in which her daughter was to repeat the history of revolt, had rejoiced to be called "citoyenne." For the days were the days of the Revolution, the

Rights of Man, the days of Tom Paine and William Cobbett. Of the latter, by the way, Mr. Hewlett gives a smart but unnecessarily snobbish sketch. Mr. Hewlett is very evidently on the side of what his great old Dowager Lady Morfa called "Family"; but at the same time he manages his butcher with no little sympathy and amazing tact. Certainly one cannot conceive for a novelist a love theme requiring more delicate handling, and Mr. Hewlett's treatment of it from beginning to end is masterly. The closing scene at Charing Cross, where Vernour stands in the pillory for having made an incendiary speech at a reform meeting, and Lady Hermia, his betrothed, stands at his side face to face with a surging mob, is not only full of noble pathos, but is a dénouement of the most skilful appropriateness; and the picture Mr. Hewlett draws of the whole scene, bringing before us, as it does, the England of that day in a few vivid strokes, is a masterpiece of the historic imagination.

VI

A NOTE ON STEPHEN PHILLIPS

FOR those who value the permanent elements in literature the enthusiastic welcome given to Mr. Stephen Phillips's poems and dramas is a great and much needed consolation at the present time. There is still, it would appear, an audience for a literature which is not all blood and drums, the literature of humanity as opposed to the truculent journalistic literature of inhumanity so fashionable during the last five years—a literature of beauty and imagination, of high meditation, of pity, of dignity.

> Return, Alphæus, the dread voice is past
> That shrunk thy streams . . .

Mr. Phillips's success does not, indeed, provide the only sign of the return of a more clement literary regime. There are one or two poets, novelists, and essayists, whose continued appreciation by a considerable public during the dark period I have referred to shows that there are some still left among us who care to keep burning the lamps of humanistic art. But Mr. Phillips's success is the most significant, because of all of them he has done his work on the

most severe and classical lines, with least concession to the fashions of contemporary pleasing.

To write tragedies, visions, and idyls in blank verse, and to draw grim pictures of the modern world in the heroic couplet seemed the last way to catch the fevered ear of the moment. But, of course, time is always bringing in its revenges, and the longer a form of art has been out of fashion, the sooner is it likely to come into fashion again. Still, the resuscitation of the poetic drama with so much welcome and *éclat* was a surprise we had hardly dared to hope for, at least in England, where the drama has for long been at so low a point of vitality and taste, in spite of all the efforts of certain dramatic critics to breathe into it the breath of a finer life, and in spite of imported examples of noble and beautiful work from the Continent. However, the public that paid so little heed to Ibsen and Maeterlinck and Hauptmann have, apparently, given a warm welcome to Mr. Stephen Phillips; and for the first time in many years an original play in blank verse has taken the town. Here, indeed, is cause for rejoicing! And not only has Mr. Phillips achieved this success on the stage, but, before *Herod* had been produced, he had already achieved the almost equally difficult success of selling his poetic play *Paolo and Francesca* in its book form hardly less rapidly than if it were a popular novel.

All which is matter not only for Mr. Phillips's private congratulation, but for public rejoicing. Seldom has an Anglo-Saxon public done itself so much credit, so spontaneously acclaimed the good thing when they found it—or rather when they were shown it. For here, too, those much-abused people, the critics, deserve no small share in this general congratulation. With the exception of Mr. Kipling, I remember no young poet of our time who has been received with such a consensus of acceptance and encouragement by the most authoritative critics. So unanimous was this that the old cry of "log-rolling" was, of course, raised. No one need pay heed to that cry, except where bad or mediocre work is manifestly being over-praised. When the really good thing has been found, the more voices that acclaim it the better, even though, indeed, there should be a conspiracy of praise. Why not? Conspiracies of blame are not unknown.

So far as one can judge from his published poetry, Mr. Phillips's development has been as sudden as his fame, though of that, of course, mere dates of publication give no reliable guidance. The work of his which had got into print previous to his little *Christ in Hades* booklet of 1896 gives but little, if any, indication of the gift which was to burst out into sudden flame—and fame—with that particular issue of Mr. Elkin Mathews's dainty little *Shilling Garland.*

A NOTE ON STEPHEN PHILLIPS

The year 1888 was a period when ballads and rondeaux were still popular, when little, sweet-smelling nosegays of verse, quaintly printed and "gotten up," were much in demand by the literary connoisseur; and, among these, a small volume entitled *Primavera*, published at Oxford in that year by four friends, won quite a distinction for itself. The names of the friends were Stephen Phillips, Laurence Binyon, Manmohan Ghose, and Arthur S. Cripps. Looking through the volume to-day, there seems nothing especially remarkable about it, nothing of those thrilling preludes by which the poet, like the immortal gods,

> gives sign
> With hushing finger, how he means to load
> His tongue with the full weight of utterless thought.

The breath of the volume is rather autumnal than vernal, but that is, of course, a mark of youthful verse; and it would be difficult to give anyone of the four friends pre-eminence over the others. The friends themselves, however, seem to have shown some indication of their view by placing Mr. Phillips in the forefront of the little volume, with a prelude which in its mood reminds one of how Keats prefaced his first poems with a sigh for "glory and loveliness" passed away for ever from the earth, just at the moment when loveliness

was about to reawaken so divinely to his singing. The reader will, no doubt, care to judge for himself of Mr. Phillips's youthful farewell to a Muse that was so soon, so to say, to throw herself into his arms.

No Muse will I invoke: for she is fled!
Lo! where she sits breathing, yet all but dead.
She loved the heavens of old, she thought them fair;
And dream'd of gods in Tempe's golden air.
For her the wind had voice, the sea its cry;
She deem'd heroic Greece could never die.
Breathless was she, to think what nymphs might play
In clear green depths, deep-shaded from the day;
She thought the dim and inarticulate god
Was beautiful, nor knew she man a sod;
But hoped what seem'd might not be all untrue,
And feared to look beyond the eternal blue.
But now the heavens are bared of dreams divine.
Still murmurs she, like Autumn, *This is mine!*
How should she face the ghastly, jarring Truth,
That questions all, and tramples without ruth?
And still she clings to Ida of her dreams,
And sobs, *Ah, let the world be what it seems!*
Then the shy nymph shall softly come again;
The world, once more, make music for her pain.
For, sitting in the dim and ghostly night,
She fain would stay the strong approach of light;
While later bards cleave to her, and believe
That in her sorrow she can still conceive!
Oh, let her dream; still lovely is her sigh;
Oh, rouse her not, or she shall surely die.

Though there is nothing remarkable here, lovers of Mr. Phillips's mature poetry will note two points about the poem which, though one could not realise it in 1888, were prophetic of certain characteristics since well marked in his verse. One point is the employment of the heroic couplet, then, as still, the least-used measure of the day, and its employment, too, with the curt rhyme endings, after the eighteenth-century manner, not as Marlowe used it, with run-over endings, technically called *enjambements*, or as Mr. Swinburne has similarly used it with such splendour in *Tristram of Lyonesse*. So, nearly ten years later, Mr. Phillips was still to use it, though, of course, with incomparable increase of poetic power.

The other point is the peculiar, indefinable poignancy of these two lines:

> For, sitting in the dim and ghostly night,
> She fain would stay the strong approach of light;

hinting already at that sense of the spectral beauty of the world which is so marked in all Mr. Phillips's subsequent poetry.

Mr. Phillips's three other contributions to *Primavera* also seem each prophetic now of a subsequent fulfilment. Particularly so is the blank-verse dramatic vignette of "Orestes," with its austere

movement and its hints of dramatic vision. Here is the opening passage, which is all I have space for:

Me in far lands did Justice call, cold queen
Among the dead, who after heat and haste
At length have leisure for her steadfast voice,
That gathers peace from the great deeps of hell.
She call'd me, saying: "I heard a cry by night!
Go thou, and question not; within thy halls
Thy will awaits fulfilment. Lo, the dead
Cries out before me in the under-world.
Seek not to justify thyself: in me
Be strong, and I will show thee wise in time;
For, though my face be dark, yet unto those
Who truly follow me through storm or shine,
For these the veil shall fall, and they shall see
They walked with Wisdom, though they knew her not."
So sped I home; and from the under-world
Forever came a wind that fill'd my sails,
Cold, like a spirit! and ever her still voice
Spoke over shoreless seas and fathomless deeps,
And in great calms, as from a colder world:
Nor slack'd I sail by day, nor yet when night
Fell on my running keel, and now would burn,
With all her eyes, my errand into me.

Of the two lyrics which complete Mr. Phillips's contributions to *Primavera*, one, "A Dream," he has retained and expanded to good purpose, under the title of "The Apparition," in his *Poems*.

But this other, "To a Lost Love," I am tempted to quote entire, not because, indeed, I consider it

a perfect poem, though its beauty and tenderness are apparent, but because of the contrast of its conventional lyrical method with the freer and more personal method of two or three later lyrics, which, in the general admiration for Mr. Phillips's blank verse, have, perhaps, been somewhat overlooked.

I cannot look upon thy grave,
  Though there the rose is sweet;
Better to hear the long wave wash
  These wastes about my feet!

Shall I take comfort? Dost thou live
  A spirit though afar,
With a deep hush about thee, like
  The stillness round a star?

Oh, thou art cold! In that high sphere
  Thou art a thing apart,
Losing in saner happiness
  This madness of the heart.

And yet, at times, thou still shalt feel
  A passing breath, a pain;
Disturb'd, as though a door in heaven
  Had oped and closed again.

And thou shalt shiver, while the hymns,
  The solemn hymns, shall cease;
A moment half remember me:
  Then turn away to peace.

But oh, for evermore thy look,
  Thy laugh, thy charm, thy tone,
Thy sweet and wayward earthliness,
  Dear trivial things, are gone!

Therefore I look not on thy grave,
  Though there the rose is sweet;
But rather hear the loud wave wash
  Those wastes about my feet.

I am sorry to be unable to illustrate Mr. Phillips's development from his next, and first independent, appearance as a poet. This was in 1894, when he privately printed the now rare philosophical poem "Eremus." My copy of "Eremus" is in England, and I have been unable to procure a copy in America in time for this article. However, the poem, though containing fine passages of meditation and strokes of beauty, is interesting mainly as showing Mr. Phillips's growing seriousness in his art and his strenuous study of blank verse, to which, however, he was as yet unable to give his own later very individual stamp. That stamp, however, in all its mature individuality, was unmistakably upon his next volume, published only two years later, the little *Christ in Hades* booklet, to which I have already made reference. Only two years, I say; because the almost miraculous metamorphosis of Keats from a doggerel writer in ladies' albums to the

supreme poet of beauty is hardly more striking than the sudden leap into maturity made by Mr. Phillips in these two years. There could be no question of mere "promise" about *Christ in Hades.* In its thrilling beauty and its clairvoyant dramatic vision it impressed one immediately as an indisputable masterpiece. Mr. Phillips has done different things equally finely, but he has never surpassed it. It is too well known to-day for there to be any need to quote from it; but, recalling what I said above as to Mr. Phillips's lyrics, I should like to recall this dramatic lyric of singular insight and poignancy —a lyric which alone could leave no doubt as to Mr. Phillips being a born dramatist as well as poet:

I in the greyness rose;
  I could not sleep for thinking of one dead.
Then to the chest I went,
  Where lie the things of my beloved spread.

Quietly these I took;
  A little glove, a sheet of music torn,
Paintings, ill-done, perhaps;
  Then lifted up a dress that she had worn.

And now I came to where
  Her letters are; they lie beneath the rest;
And read them in the haze;
  She spoke of many things, was sore opprest.

But these things moved me not;
  Not when she spoke of being parted quite,
Or being misunderstood,
  Or growing weary of the world's great fight.

Not even when she wrote
  Of our dead child, and the handwriting swerved;
Not even then I shook:
  Not even by such words was I unnerved.

I thought, she is at peace;
  Whither the child is gone, she, too, has passed.
And a much-needed rest
  Is fallen upon her, she is still at last.

But when at length I took
  From under all those letters one small sheet,
Folded and writ in haste;
  Why did my heart with sudden sharpness beat?

Alas, it was not sad!
  Her saddest words I had read calmly o'er.
Alas, it had no pain!
  Her painful words, all these I knew before.

A hurried, happy line!
  A little jest, too slight for one so dead:
This did I not endure:
  Then with a shuddering heart no more I read.

Only a year later (1897) Mr. Phillips, in reprinting *Christ in Hades* and the poems accompanying it in

a new volume of *Poems*, published by Mr. John Lane, was able to add to them several new poems of importance, three of them, at least, showing striking new developments in his poetic gift—developments remarkably diverse. On the one hand, we had "Marpessa," perhaps the most supremely beautiful treatment of a "classical" subject since Keats, and certainly the loveliest love-poem of our time; and, on the other, we had "The Woman with the Dead Soul" and "The Wife," tragic studies in modern realism, which, however, the noble pity pervading them entirely lifted above other realistic experiments of a similar kind in recent verse or prose. You have but to compare Mr. Henley's sonnets on London types with Mr. Phillips's London poems to see how this quality of humanity makes the younger man's work so much more valuable than the other's. Each alike has a great gift for vividly catching a likeness, in a line or two; but the one seems to etch in vitriol with a cruel delight in the sordidness and deformity of his subjects, and the other, though even more forcibly and more truly realistically, in tears. A greater contrast than "The Wife" and "Marpessa" could hardly be found in any young poet's work, and the contrast augurs well for the breadth of Mr. Phillips's powers—the variety of the subject-matter he is capable of handling. Mr. Phillips, almost

alone among our younger poets, seems to possess the capacity, to use a colloquial phrase, of "breaking out into a fresh place." Two years later, again, he was to illustrate this capacity in his beautiful tragedy of *Paolo and Francesca*, and now he has made a further advance with *Herod*. That he has many more surprises of power in store for us who that has followed his work can doubt? I should not be surprised if his development took the direction of perfecting his lyric gift, or led him once more to the contemplation of the Inferno of London, which has long haunted his imagination. He himself, in an essay published a year or two ago, declared his interest in the unseen spiritual world as a theme for poetic treatment, and the strangely visionary nature of his imagination would make any experiments of his in that direction matters of peculiar expectancy.

Returning to that work of his which is at present interesting the public, some critics, I notice, while admirers of his poetry, have expressed surprise at his dramatic success. The surprise is that anyone can have read his poetry without feeling that its very essence is dramatic insight. Beautiful as his lines are, they are always muscular with reality. *Christ in Hades* was packed with the dramatic imagination from end to end. Its chief beauty was that of dramatic truth. Perhaps, as I have else-

where said, it is rather the truth than the beauty of his poetry that first arrests one, or should one say that most of the beauty of his poetry comes of its truth, which is another way of saying that it is very real poetry indeed? At all events, I remember to have read nothing of Mr. Phillips's that was not essentially dramatic. That he should succeed in formal drama is to me, therefore, a secondary consideration; but that he has succeeded there can be no question, particularly in *Herod.* Perhaps, on the whole, the last act of *Herod* is the finest thing he has done. The first two acts seem to me to carry dramatic brevity of expression almost to baldness, and dramatic construction almost to the point of a diagram in dramatic anatomy—a well-knit skeleton of a drama rather than a drama. For, while it is true that in most poetic dramas the characters speak too much, it may be urged that it is possible for them to speak too little. And it must always be remembered in criticising poetic drama—as, indeed, any form of drama—that it is a convention—a convention that only within certain limits recognises so-called "realistic" action and speech, or even that bugbear of the young dramatist, "stage exigency."

In the third act of *Herod,* however, the dramatic skeleton is unmistakably clothed [illegible] blood, uttering wonderful human [illegible]

difficult, I think, to find an act in any English poetic play since the Elizabethans in which at once the dramatic interest is so keen and so subtly developed, and the quality of the poetry so fine. The wonderful way in which the mad king's longing for his dead wife—whom he more than half believes dead, and dares not quite half believe alive—is made to grow from moment to moment, while his courtiers seek to distract him into his various ambitious plans for the good of his people, such as the building of the great Temple and the port at Cæsarea, can only be illustrated by quotation.

HEROD. Pour out those pearls,
And give me in my hand that bar of gold.
I heard an angel crying from the Sun,
For glory, for more glory on the earth;
And here I'll build the wonder of the world.
I have conceived a Temple that shall stand
Up in such splendour that men bright from it
Shall pass with a light glance the pyramids.
I'll have—

Re-enter ATTENDANT.

Ah! come you from the queen? Fear not. She is asleep?

GADIAS (*to whom* ATTENDANT *has whispered*). She is fallen in a deep sleep.

HEROD. Ah, rouse her not.
(*To* ATTENDANT.) You did not touch her? No?

You did not speak o'er loud? She did not stir then?
ATTEND. O king! she stirred not once.
HEROD. Such sleep is good.
But there was still the moving of the breast?
ATTEND. O king—
HEROD (*hastily*). Yes—yes—I understand—I—
PRIEST. Sir,
Each moment wasted from this huge emprise
The Temple—
HEROD (*to* ATTENDANT). Hither, quietly in my ear.
I say—you saw—her bosom stirred?
ATTEND. I saw—
HEROD. You saw! It is enough!
(*To Court.*) Bear with me—Oh!
I dreamed last night of a dome of beaten gold
To be a counter-glory to the Sun.
There shall the eagle blindly dash himself,
There the first beam shall strike, and there the moon
Shall aim all night her argent archery;
And it shall be the tryst of sundered stars,
The haunt of dead and dreaming Solomon;
Shall send a light upon the lost in Hell,
And flashings upon faces without hope—
And I will think in gold and dream in silver,
Imagine in marble and in bronze conceive.
Till it shall dazzle pilgrim nations
And stammering tribes from undiscovered lands,
Allure the living God out of the bliss,
And all the streaming seraphim from heaven.
(HEROD *looks at door and sits.*)
That bag of emeralds, give it to me—so:

And yonder sack of rubies; I will gaze
On glittering things.
(*Sits listlessly, hands down.*)
Let one of you go forth
And rouse the queen—not roughly be it done—
But rouse her! I would have her waked from sleep.

Even this lengthy quotation but poorly illustrates the masterly dramatic modulation of the scene and the exquisite tenderness of it. Of its sumptuous language, however, it gives a juster idea. It is no flattery of Mr. Phillips to say that Marlowe might have signed it with pride. Mr. Phillips has often been called "Miltonic." It is new to find him using Marlowe's drums and trumpets of barbaric pomp so grandly. But, as I have said, this is far from being his last surprise to us.

Meanwhile, all true lovers of literature will salute him with gratitude and pride and wish him all the laurels his head can carry.

VII

A VIVISECTIONIST OF LITERATURE

MR. ARTHUR SYMONS, writing very ingeniously of Coleridge, in this remarkable, almost uncanny book of criticism,* is very severe on Coleridge's weakness for disciples. "It may be," he says, "that we have had no more wonderful talker, and, no doubt, the talk had its reverential listeners, its disciples; but to cultivate or permit disciples is itself a kind of waste, a kind of weakness."

Yet, if certain other masters had been stronger than Coleridge, and denied the disciple! Walter Pater, for example. In that case we should surely have lost these essays, lost, indeed, Mr. Symons altogether. For, if ever there was a disciple, carrying out the mandate of his master to the last minutiæ of instruction, that disciple is Mr. Symons.

The best criticism or appreciation of this brilliant book would be to reprint the famous preface to Pater's "The Renaissance"; but a sentence from it

* *The Romantic Movement in English Poetry*, by Arthur Symons, 1909.

will suffice to show with what devotion and skill Mr. Symons has applied the formula of his master:

"The function of the æsthetic critic," writes Pater, "is to distinguish, analyse, and separate from its adjuncts the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book produces its special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced. His end is reached when he has disengaged that virtue and noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element, for himself and others."

Indeed, Mr. Symons has applied the formula of his master, as his master was incapable of applying it—applied it with a narrow thoroughness which was impossible for Pater, with his richness of temperament and his coloured humanity. Pater was a poet who fondly dreamed he was a critic; Mr. Symons is a critic who fondly dreams he is a poet. Mr. Symons is to Pater what some disciples of Leonardo were to that great conscious-unconscious master. Just as such disciples of Leonardo learned only his "science," took to heart only his manifold experiments in anatomy and physics—missing, as they could not fail to miss, the incommunicable secret of his genius, to the subtle master himself also a secret—so Mr. Symons has detached from Pater his theory, a theory Pater never really applied, though he dreamed

all his life he was applying it, and fulfilled, as his master's richer nature precluded his fulfilling, his master's dream of a detached, inhuman, objective criticism—a cold-blooded chemical analysis of literature.

Pater's chemist as critic was merely one of those one-sided similitudes which the creative mind, striving for the moment to be critical, throws out with fanciful carelessness. Of all men, Pater knew the dry inadequacy of such a similitude to the complete and mysterious business of understanding and interpreting organisms so fragrant with the breath of life, so beating with the human heart, so magically irradiated with the enchantment of the invisible powers, as are the masterpieces of any of the arts, not least the art we call literature. Pater, with his gentle humanity, even tender humour—under all the sacerdotalism of his style—thought of æsthetic criticism as a sort of æsthetic chemistry. His disciple, however, has gone farther. He is, among his many accomplishments, a chemist, of course; but, seeking for one word to describe the gift most apparent in this strange book, I would call Mr. Symons a vivisectionist. A remarkable vivisectionist of literature.

With what cold hands he takes up alike the living and the dead, the living and the dead poets born in England between the years 1722 and 1799, and

marking faintly or forcibly "The Romantic Movement in English Poetry"; with what cold eyes he reads their pages, and yet—to such success has the so-called scientific critical method evolved with Mr. Symons—with what unexpected justice of judgment does he weigh gifts and qualities alien to the bias of his mind or his own personal predilection; this man who never seems to have had a dream of his own—this man who never seems to have felt a kindly human emotion—how strange it is that he can with such even meticulous accuracy assess the dreams and the hearts of others. In that same essay on Coleridge Mr. Symons says of Lamb, that, "concerned only with individual things," he "looks straight at them, not through them, seeing them implacably."

Again, quoting with patronising approval one of Rossetti's "invaluable notes on poetry," he reminds us that, for Rossetti, "the leading point about Coleridge's work is its human love."

I place these two quotations together for the reason that Lamb's "seeing them implacably"—the "seeing" having reference to his "midnight folios" Elizabethans—included loving them. Lamb loved literature, loved it, loved his unfashionable Elizabethans, his Sir Thomas Browne, his "Anatomy of Melancholy," his Duchess of Newcastle, and, through his great love of them, has imposed his love

upon us who have followed him—very much as Pater has imposed his love of the "Mona Lisa" on a bewildered American public.

Love! Rossetti, according to Mr. Symons's quotation, said that "the leading point about Coleridge's work is its human love."

Commenting on this passage, and some words of Coleridge's own, Mr. Symons says:

> Yet Love, though it is the word which he uses of himself, is not really what he himself meant when using it, but rather an affectionate sympathy, in which there seems to have been but little element of passion.

Rossetti, let us again recall, said "human love." Mr. Symons evidently understands love only when it contains the "element of passion." "Love" for Mr. Symons would seem to mean only sexual love, as one discovers in his essay on Keats, the one self-revelation in an almost inhumanly impersonal book.

The really great critic, such as Lamb, such as Coleridge, loves literature. His judicial "implacability," as I said before, includes a great love, a great gratitude that literature exists at all—that there are great, and even little, books in the world to read and to love. He does not sit up as a pert, lightweight Rhadamanthus, with a shrill cockney accent, pronouncing a glib doom on this poet and on that.

So clever, so soulless, so without pity, so without love, and yet so strangely understanding, are these criticisms of Mr. Symons, that I am driven to a theological explanation of them. They are of the Devil. Seriously, there are only two who know the world: God and the Devil. Both know it almost equally well; the only advantage that God has in his knowledge of the world is that he knows it—with love.

That is what Coleridge meant in the "Ancient Mariner," what Blake meant, and what Mr. Symons —let us admit—has been doing his best to understand.

Since Mr. Symons met Mr. W. B. Yeats—some of us remember the occasion—he has been trying to "believe in fairies," and there are many pages in this book of his which make one think that perhaps, after all, Mr. Yeats took him to some green hill in Connemara, at the rising of the moon, and that there, indeed, he saw that world which to the Celtic eyes of Mr. Yeats is the only visible world—and surely the only world worth seeing.

His comment on "Kubla Khan"—wonderfully written—will illustrate, at the same time, how nearly Mr. Symons has approached that world of "fairie" and what gossamer-sensitive scales are his in which to weigh rainbows and moonbeams, and even human tears.

Here allow me to go back for a moment to Mr. Symons's essay on Keats to make this quotation, which shows, not only that a vivisectionist critic may be human, after all, but that Mr. Symons can, now and again, like his great master, lapse into passages of something like created prose:

Have you ever thought of the frightful thing it is to shift one's centre? That is, what it is to love a woman. One's nature no longer radiates freely from its own centre. The centre itself is shifted, is put outside one's self. Up to then one may have been unhappy, one may have failed, many things may seem to have gone wrong. But at least there was this security—that one's enemies were all outside the gate. With the woman whom one loves one admits all one's enemies. Think: All one's happiness to depend upon the will of another, on that other's fragility, faith, mutability; on the way life comes to the heart, soul, conscience, nerves of someone else, no longer the quite sufficient difficulties of a personal heart, soul, conscience, and nerves. It is to call in a passing stranger and to say: "Guard all my treasures while I sleep. For there is no certainty in the world, beyond the certainty that I am I, and that what is not I can never draw one breath for me, though I were dying for lack of it."

But, penetrating and subtle as are Mr. Symons's criticisms of the great poets of the period under his consideration—Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Byron—the more piquant originality

of his book for me lies in his comments on the lesser writers. In these he displays at times a cruel scientific wit, in the mere exercise of his critical function, and at times also reveals unexpected condescensions of kindly human feeling, and an understanding of certain homely human needs in regard to poetry which are sometimes satisfied by poets who are not learned metricists, or sophisticated literary persons, such as Mr. Symons.

It is delightful to watch how certain once sounding fames shrivel up to a few caustic lines at the touch of his pen—that once so formidable William Gifford, for example. I will quote Mr. Symons's comment on Gifford entire as a good sample of his method:

In the honest fragment of autobiography which prefaces his translation of Juvenal, Gifford tells us, perhaps needlessly, that he had no natural instinct for poetry. He comments on his "gloom and savage unsociability," and on his waste of exertion on "splenetic and vexatious tricks"; and "The Baviad" and "The Moeviad" are hardly more than so much waste, the waste of a prose writer who takes up verse to chastise the writers of bad verse. Only from the actual evidence of the footnotes can we believe in the existence of "Laura's tinkling trash" and the varied and unending inaptitudes of Della Crusca. The school existed, and Gifford killed it; yet such small game leaves but mangled carrion behind; and verse and notes are now equally unreadable.

And how sincerely grateful one is to him for his castigation of Southey. Poor Southey! Little did he foresee, he who was so confident in the judgment of "posterity," that a twentieth-century critic would adjudge his wife the greater poet! Yet Mr. Symons, with the accuracy of some diabolical psychometric register, measures out the vital residuum from all the dross and dust of that once so pompous fame. In this cold, unfailing justice is the singularity, and even charm, of this book. One turns to one poet after another, just to see what Mr. Symons has made of them, and always we meet the same cold, comprehending mind, incorruptible as a spirit-level.

You would expect Mr. Symons to appreciate Coleridge and Keats, but you would hardly expect to find him, not only appreciating, but writing his very best about Barham (of *The Ingoldsby Legends*) and Tom Hood. It is in these surprises of his book that he stretches the octave of his critical gift, and shows that he is a critic indeed. Anyone, if, as Charles Lamb said, he has "a mind to," can write well about Coleridge and Keats, but no one has ever written like this about Hood:

"Eugene Aram" is a masterpiece of horror, and in it Hood perfects that style which has an emphasis far beyond epigram, because it comes straight from the heart, and carries with it an awful inwardness of

thought. . . . Since "The Ancient Mariner" there has been no such spiritual fear in our poetry, and the nightmare comes to us as if out of our own bed, the sensations translate themselves into our own nerves. The words reach us like a whisper from which it is impossible to escape. That imagination, which had hardly shown itself among the thick flocks of fancy in all the other poems, is here, naked, deadly, and beautiful. In "The Song of the Shirt" this drama passes into an indignant song, not less human, and coming with its splendid lyric quality to prove that a conviction, a moral lesson if you will, can turn red-hot and be forged into a poem. Here, too, is "modernity," but of a kind that can be contemporary with every age. Only one more human thing exists in the work of Hood, and that is one of the greatest English poems of its kind, "The Bridge of Sighs." . . . The fragility of the metre, its swiftness, as of running water, the piercing daintiness of the words, which state and denounce in a song, go to make a poem which is like music and like a cry, and means something terribly close and accusing. A stone is flung angrily and straight into the air, and may strike the canopy before it falls back on the earth. That saying of

> "Anywhere, anywhere,
> Out of the world!"

has passed through interpreters, and helped to make a rare corner of modern literature, and the pity of the whole thing is like that of a great line of Dante, not less universal.

Coleridge and Keats do not need even Mr. Symons to write about them, but in such writing as this on Hood a critic does real service, not only to the shade of a neglected man of genius, but to all lovers of poetry.

Again and again in this book we come with a shock of grateful surprise upon a penetrating recognition of the merits of some half-forgotten writer—John O'Keeffe, Hookham Frere, William Thom, for examples among many others; and if a poet, however obscure, has a gift however small, or even but one fine line, you may be sure that Mr. Symons will have discovered it. For his business, as he tells us in his preface, is entirely with the poet and his poetry, not with his environment or his historical significance. He uses the phrase "The Romantic Movement in English poetry" to cover these poets who illustrated, in however slight a degree, the awakening of English poetry from the long sleep of the eighteenth century —"The Renascence of Wonder," to quote the phrase of Mr. Watts-Dunton, to whom Mr. Symons dedicates his book characteristically—in Romany. But it will be best to allow Mr. Symons to explain his attempt and method for himself:

It is [he says] each one of these poets whom I want to study, finding out, if I can, what he was in himself, what he made of himself in his work,

and by what means, impulses, and instincts. The poet, the poem—it is with these only that I am concerned.

And, again for convenience, I have set limits to my plan. The year 1800 is taken as a sort of centre, or shall I say a barrier? which shuts out every writer of verse who was born after that year, and lets through everyone who survived from the eighteenth into the nineteenth century. My plan allows me no choice between good or bad writers in verse; I give each his due consideration, his due space of a few lines or of many pages. And I have given each in chronological order, with the dates of his birth and death and of the first edition of his published volumes of verse. I have consulted no histories of literature, nor essays about it, except for the bare facts of a man's life or work, but I have tried to get at one thing only—the poet in his poetry, his poetry in the poet; it is the same thing.

Mr. Symons, in applying this method, has produced a book of criticism of real value and of great entertainment. There is no book quite like it in English criticism, though there may be other books of criticism of more lasting importance—from their possession of that humanising enthusiasm which seems to be the only gift Mr. Symons lacks. An almost painful culture is his, an even morbid cultivation of the æsthetic senses, and there is no need to say how arduously he has trained himself for his office of critic by eager and minute studies

in all the arts. If only, as I said at the beginning, we could feel that he loved literature with a simpler joy in it, that he occasionally looked up to his poets with something of a natural delight and gratitude, rather than always looked down upon them as "specimens" to be classified and somewhat patronisingly studied! If it were not for this taint of the superior person, marring all he writes, Mr. Symons might have been a great critic.

VIII

ANATOLE FRANCE IN ENGLISH DRESS

YEARS ago Mr. Andrew Lang, whose own genius is much akin to that of M. Anatole France, writing of M. France, with a charming stroke of fancy worthy of his subject, said that there are some literary reputations that, like fairies, cannot cross running water—delicate Gallic fames, he meant, of course, that cannot cross the English Channel. At that time, if I remember rightly, M. Anatole France had written little beyond *The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard*, his famous story of Pontius Pilate, and the causeries on books and the stage then appearing week by week in *Le Temps* and republished since under the title of *La Vie Littéraire.*

Mr. Lang, however, was wrong, for M. Anatole France's reputation has since then crossed much running water, including the Atlantic Ocean. Indeed, that inspired transplanter of literary exotics, Lafcadio Hearn, had already translated *The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard*, as only he could

translate; and Oscar Wilde, in his famous essay on criticism, reprinted in his *Intentions*, had appropriated and developed M. France's theory of autobiographical criticism, as only Mr. Wilde could appropriate and develop.

"Criticism," had said M. France, in a phrase which became immediately classical, "is the adventures of the critic's soul among masterpieces." The critic's subject, he had gone on to say, was merely an excuse for the critic talking about himself. "I propose," he said, "to speak of myself *à propos* Molière, Shakespeare, Racine."

M. France is, therefore, responsible for so overwhelming a deluge of autobiographical criticism that one welcomes such a return to the old impersonal method, as Mr. Symons's book on *The Romantic Movement in English Poetry*, of which I have written elsewhere.

But he is responsible, too, for a more attractive, as well as more profound, development of the modern way of looking at the past. That little story concerning Pontius Pilate and Jesus Christ, to which I have referred, came like the lightning flash of a new historical method. As Pontius answered his learned philosophical friend, concerning the circumstances of the trial and death of Jesus Christ, so some day, thirty years hence, Lord Kitchener, wheeled in a bath-chair somewhere on the Riviera,

may answer some learned philosophical friend, interested in the comparative study of religions, concerning some "Mad Mullah" who made "holy war" during Lord Kitchener's administration of the Soudan.

So fragile seemed this gift at first, so like a flower! But, as George Meredith has said: "Some flowers have roots deep as oaks"; and, year by year, as book has followed book, the world has realised that the mind of Anatole France has the dynamic quality of those terrible unseen forces, which seem to be more powerful as they are invisible, imponderable, and immaterial; such forces as the Anarchist Clair, on one of the last pages of M. France's profoundest and wittiest book, *Penguin Island*, refers to in this pregnant and prophetic statement:

> Now that we can procure radium in sufficient quantities, science possesses incomparable means of analysis; even at present we get glimpses, within what are called simple bodies, of extremely diversified, complex ones, and we discover energies in matter which seem to increase even by reason of its tenuity.

Indeed, as one has read his books with unusual gratitude year by year, we have seemed to catch a glimpse of that mysterious intellectual alchemy which makes gold out of the dreariest ingredients, that thaumaturgic spiritual power which made Aaron's rod to blossom, and the dry bones in the

valley to stand up and clothe themself in the appealing guise of humanity, at the word of the prophet Ezekiel.

Probably no such alchemist of learning, no such transmuter of dreary historical information, has ever written in any language. Place some withered old chronicle in his hands, or a dissertation on Greek accents, or some weary history of a forgotten people, and he will immediately change them into a fairy tale.

Of all writers he has illustrated the truth of Milton's lines:

> How charming is divine philosophy!
> Not harsh, and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
> But musical as is Apollo's lute.

In this respect, need I say, he is almost alone among scholars; for, since Erasmus, whose "Colloquies" must be very near to M. France's heart, no man has, so to say, got so much fun out of his learning or made the desert of encyclopedias to blossom like the rose.

Strange, beautiful, fairylike, cynical, and almost spiritual writing! Almost spiritual! That "almost" expresses, I think, for some of us our disappointment in M. France's work. No one has written more delicately about fairies, or rivers flowing amid flowering reeds. It is only when, as in his *Jeanne*

d'Arc, he presumes to talk about God, that we realise that he is a Frenchman, in direct descent from Montaigne and Voltaire. Few Frenchmen of importance have ever believed in God; the Frenchman is a born atheist, and an Anglo-Saxon can hardly suffer him to write of spiritual things. In illustration of this statement, let me quote this passage from M. France's *Jeanne d'Arc*, just admirably translated by Miss Winifred Stephens:

The inhabitants of Orléans feared God. In those days God was greatly to be feared; He was almost as terrible as in the days of the Philistines. The poor fisherfolk were afraid of being repulsed if they addressed Him in their affliction: they thought it better to take a roundabout road and to seek the intercession of our Lady and the saints. God respected His Mother and sought to please Her on every occasion. Likewise He deferred to the wishes of the Blessed, seated on His right hand and on His left in Paradise, and He inclined His ear to listen to the petitions they presented to Him. Thus in cases of dire necessity it was customary to solicit the favour of the saints in presenting prayers and offerings.

Such writing as this will seem little short of vulgar to anyone who has realised in any degree the reality and purity of the invisible presences; and it is this daintily sneering undertone that runs through his whole book that makes M. France's interpretation

of the life of Jeanne d'Arc, with all its transfigured learning, with all its illuminated borders and historical backgrounds, a vain thing. We must go back to Mr. Lang, after all, "hagiographer," as M. France may laughingly call him, for the real understanding—understanding which comes of reverence before the simplicity of divine things—of the miraculous girl who saved France, and to whom, as M. France wittily says in the preface to this English translation, England, through his "English critics," consecrates "a pious zeal which is almost an expiatory worship."

But if M. France should not be allowed to write about God, who else can write like this about fairies and the old pagan *revenants* that flickered with fantastic phosphorescence on the Christian borders of the mediæval world?

At the foot of the hill, toward the village, was a spring, on the margin of which gooseberry bushes intertwined their branches of greyish green. It was called the Gooseberry Spring or the Blackthorn Spring. If, as was thought by a graduate of the University of Paris, Jeanne described it as La Fontaine-aux-Bonnes-Fées-Notre-Seigneur, it must have been because the village people called it by that name. By making use of that term it would seem as if those rustic souls were trying to Christianize the nymphs of the woods and waters, in whom certain teachers discerned the demons which the heathen once worshipped as goddesses.

It was quite true. Goddesses as much feared and venerated as the Parcæ had come to be called Fates, and to them had been attributed power over the destinies of men. But, fallen long since from their powerful and high estate, these village fairies had grown as simple as the people among whom they lived. They were invited to baptisms, and a place at table was laid for them in the room next the mother's. At these festivals they ate alone and came and went without anyone's knowing; people avoided spying upon their movements for fear of displeasing them. It is the custom of divine personages to go and come in secret. . . . Near by, on the border of the wood, was an ancient beech, overhanging the high-road to Neufchâteau and casting a grateful shade. The beech was venerated almost as piously as had been those trees which were held sacred in the days before apostolic missionaries evangelized Gaul. No hand dared touch its branches, which swept the ground. "Even the lilies are not more beautiful." Like the spring, the tree had many names. It was called l'Arbre-des-Dames, l'Arbre-aux-Loges-les-Dames, l'Arbre-des-Fées, l'Arbre-Charmine-Fée-le-Bourlémont, le Beau Mai. Everyone at Domremy knew that fairies existed and that they had been seen under l'Arbre-aux-Loges-les-Dames.

Who, again, has written like this of rivers:

From Neufchâteau to Vaucouleurs the clear waters of the Meuse flow freely between banks covered with rows of poplar trees and low bushes

of alder and willow. Now they wind in sudden bends, now in gradual curves, for ever breaking up into narrow streams, and then the threads of greenish waters gather together again, or here and there are suddenly lost to sight under ground. In the summer the river is a lazy stream, barely bending in its course the reeds which grow upon its shallow bed, and from the bank one may watch its lapping waters kept back by clumps of rushes scarcely covering a little sand and moss. But in the season of heavy rains, swollen by sudden torrents, deeper and more rapid, as it rushes along, it leaves behind it on the banks a kind of dew, which rises in pools of clear water on a level with the grass of the valley. This valley, two or three miles broad, stretches unbroken between low hills, softly undulating, crowned with oaks, maples, and birches. Although strewn with wild flowers in the spring, it looks severe, grave, and sometimes even sad. The green grass imparts to it a monotony like that of stagnant water; even on fine days one is conscious of a hard, cold climate. The sky seems more genial than the earth. It beams upon it with a tearful smile; it constitutes all the movement, the grace, the exquisite charm, of this delicate, tranquil landscape. Then when winter comes the sky merges with the earth in a kind of chaos. Fogs come down, thick and clinging. The white, light mists which in summer veil the bottom of the valley, give place to thick clouds and dark, moving mountains, but slowly scattered by a red, cold sun. Wanderers ranging the uplands in the early morning might dream with the mystics in their ecstasy that they are walking on clouds.

And it is impossible to read these quotations without a grateful surprise that such delicate French can be translated into such delicate, idiomatic English. Mr. Frederic Chapman, the editor of this English edition of M. France, himself the translator of several of the volumes, has been fortunate in his choice of associates, for a talent so elusive, a fancy so elfish, a style so mobile, language so strangely dyed with so many half-forgotten colours, a mind so clear and yet so whimsical, to have found such reincarnation in another language is a piece of good fortune that has seldom befallen a writer of any tongue.

IX

WILLIAM WATSON AND HIS POETRY

A VOLUME of "New Poems" by Mr. Watson—really new poems—is, as his English publisher has truthfully advertised, an event of real interest, perhaps even importance, to that small band of us who love, though we may not cultivate, "the homely slighted shepherd's trade."

In the interval between his last volume of new verses and this now published Mr. Watson has vouchsafed no condescension to his admirers beyond the issuing of various new and collected editions of the poems some of us seem to have grown old in quoting—a frail, but perhaps imperishable, garland of elegiac and epigrammatic song. From the beginning Mr. Watson has treated himself as a classic, with a Wordsworthian complacency in his own immortality, and he has edited and re-edited himself in succeeding editions of his poems, with a reverence and a scholarly rectitude such as in our day has only been paralleled by Prof. Robinson Ellis's editing of Catullus.

morns, and generally taking up the daily human struggle with a mysterious universe, and at the last going to rest under some pathetic village headstone, we say that his subject-matter is very near to the great warm heart of man.

If another poet, writing with almost equal skill and charm, chooses for his subject-matter themes less near to the heart of man than near to the heart of the literary man, we call him, in the old phrase, "a poet's poet," or a writer's writer. Such a poet is Mr. Watson. His best poetry has been inspired by a noble enthusiasm for literature, an enthusiasm directed by an exceptionally sure insight and skill of critical definition. There are four lines in his "Wordsworth's Grave" which, sheerly as criticism, are worth whole volumes of prose. There is hardly need to quote them, for they are so well known, as perhaps the best example of concentrated criticism—criticism that is itself poetry—in the English language. Yet I cannot deny myself the pleasure of once more copying them out:

Not Milton's keen translunar music thine,
  Not Shakespeare's cloudless, boundless, human view,
Not Shelley's flush of rose on peaks divine,
  Nor yet the wizard twilight Coleridge knew.

As an elegiac critic, rather than simple elegist, Mr. Watson has a place all his own. Not only

his "Wordsworth's Grave," but his elegies on Matthew Arnold and Burns—both better than his more notorious elegy on Tennyson, "Lachrymæ Musarum"—give him, I think, something of that fame which is more enduring than brass.

If men in distant future days still go on loving poetry, and the poets Mr. Watson has sung, they can hardly fail to read with gratitude the man who has sung as he has done of the great poets of his own time—not, of course, including Swinburne.

Sometimes, too, in his academic garden has sprung a laughing blue-eyed lyric, such as his song of April; and some of us, as boys in Liverpool, and even then collectors of first editions, bought up all the copies we could of his famous "Epigrams." Since then how often we have quoted his lines on Shelley and Harriet Westbrook:

A star looked down from heaven, and loved a flower,
Grown in earth's garden—loved it for an hour;
O you who watch his orbit in the spheres,
Refuse not to a ruined rosebud tears.

Yes! and the same gifts are here still in these somewhat wintry gleanings gathered into a thin sheaf by the John Lane Company. Here is still an echo of the same noble rage which stirred Mr. Watson to write his well-known sonnets on "the Armenian atrocities"—as we called them collo-

quially, as though they were a form of Turkish delight. His sonnet on "Leopold of Belgium" is a fine example of his righteous indignation:

Khalifs and Khans have we beheld, who trod
  The people as one neck beneath their heel;
  Whose revel was the woe they could not feel,
Whose pastime was the dripping scourge and rod;
Who shook swift death on thousands with a nod,
  And made mankind as stubble to their steel;
  Who slew for Faith and Heaven, in dreadful zeal
To pleasure Him whom they mistook for God.
No zeal, no Faith inspired this Leopold,
  Nor any madness of half-splendid birth.
Merely he loosed the hounds that rend and slay
That he might have his fill of loathsome gold.
  Embalm him, Time! Forget him not, O Earth!
Trumpet his name, and flood his deeds with day.

Also his poem "Vivisection" is sternly tender with a pity that has always filled his heart for oppressed things, be they nations or animals. The beauty, too, that visits his lips awhile with an aery spirituality is here in these opening lines:

Wild nature, not by kindness won, because
So seldom wooed that way;—thou melodist,
That singest only the eternal songs,
And changeless through the ages, conquerest Time;
Thou white-wing'd joy, skimming the white-lipp'd sea;
Thou antlered forest lord: nor ye alone—
The eminent and splendid ones of Earth—
But creatures nearer to Man's daily walk . . .

But the two lines that follow illustrate the defect of Mr. Watson's method:

> Thou timorous fugitive, obscurely housed
> In populous labyrinth under hillock and holm . . .

Mr. Watson, of course, means a rabbit; as when Milton wrote of his proverbial "tame villatic fowl," he meant, presumably, a hen.

Yet one cannot but feel that such a style of referring to a rabbit is a little too pontifical, and, humanly, prefer Oliver Herford's "timid bunny in the land."

It is in such lines as these that what one must call the anachronism of Mr. Watson's style becomes trivially apparent. It is seriously apparent in his treatment of modern political situations. Practically, it is no use writing against the modern Turk in the manner of Milton or Wordsworth. The modern Trytæus must strike the lyre to a music that the modern man understands. Mr. Watson's "Purple East"—alas!—did nothing for Armenia; but Mr. Kipling's "Absent-Minded Beggar" earned many thousand pounds for the widows of English soldiers during the Boer war.

It may be said that Mr. Watson's sonnets on Armenia are better poetry than Mr. Kipling's—though I am not saying it; my point is that

poetry aiming at practical results should be practical, and able to do the work the poet sets out to do.

I should imagine it a somewhat hopeless enterprise to attack the Oil Trust in the metre of Spenser's "Faerie Queene," but I can imagine a modern poet attacking it to some purpose in the language—well, say, of George Ade.

But this is merely to point out the obvious defect of Mr. Watson's method as applied with sincere purpose to certain modern phenomena. All methods have their defects, but few poetic methods have brought to living ears a music of greater dignity, or, with such grave sweetness, recalled the wandering modern mind to a too long forgotten mood of beautiful antique meditation. If there was nothing else in Mr. Watson's new volume, it would surely be worth buying over and over again for this one of many beautiful "Sonnets to Miranda":

If I had never known your face at all,
  Had only heard you speak, beyond thick screen
  Of leaves, in an old garden, when the sheen
Of morning dwelt on dial and ivied wall,
I think your voice had been enough to call
  Yourself before me, in living vision seen,
  So pregnant with your Essence had it been,
So charged with You, in each soft rise and fall.

At least I know, that when upon the night
  With chanted word your voice lets loose your soul,
I am pierced, I am pierced and cloven, with Delight
  That hath all Pain within it, and the whole
World's tears: all ecstasy of inward sight;
  And the blind cry of all the seas that roll.

X

A DAY AT HOME WITH BJÖRNSON

I HAVE read in the papers that Björnson is dying. I hope not yet. For his death will make the world still smaller. Nearly all the giants are gone. When Björnson dies there will be only one giant left—Tolstoi.

Björnson is more than a writer—beautiful writer and singer of lovely songs as he is—we all know "Arne," and a Norwegian friend of mine has translated for me his poems.

I, too, have heard him speak. He is one of the greatest orators in the world. Whether or not he was wise in using the force of his great and gentle personality in severing Sweden and Norway, and giving them separate flags, is a question for the future to decide.

The morning, many years ago, when I had the honour of being his guest in his house in Aulestad, near Lillehammer—in company with my friends John Lane, Osman Edwards, and Rosencrantz Johnson, Johnson being one of the famous repre-

sentatives of the Norwegian "Bohème"—he talked to me about Norway and Sweden as he paced his room, talked wonderful English, as most Scandinavians can. I knew very little about it. I was only a boy, and he was a very great man. Of course, I didn't try to talk. It was wonderful enough to listen.

We had arrived at Aulestad quite early in the morning, riding in carioles—about 7:30. Herr Björnson's house is built in a long pine-clad valley, a verandaed house, American fashion, and as we arrived in our funny little carioles, Björnson was standing awaiting us with outspread arms, like a patriarch, with his beautiful white locks, and his broad, strong, glorious, gentle face, and he cried out to us: "Welcome to Aulestad!" On his shoulder he carried a towel. "I am going to take my bath," he said, "up here in the ravine. Will you join me?"

So we walked up through pine trees with him, and came where a torrent of thirteen feet of white water fell among the rocks.

I shall never forget the beauty of that great old man, standing, like the god Saturn, with the white water pouring over his shoulders, among the rocks and the pines.

Then we went down again to the house and met his beautiful wife, his beautiful daughter Bergliot, and his strong son, the Director of the Royal Theatre

in Christiania. And Herr Björnson and his wife, after the old saga fashion, sat together at the head of the table, like a King and a Queen, on a raised dais, and all drank "skale" to their four guests.

Afterward Björnson took me up to his study and we talked about Ibsen, whose son, Sigurd, Bergliot Björnson afterwards married.

"Ibsen," said Björnson to me, "is not a man—he is only a pen."

"A wonderful pen, though, don't you think?" I answered.

But in my heart I said: "It is far more wonderful to be a like man you."

XI

SIDNEY LANIER: AN ENGLISH APPRECIATION

A FRIEND asked me the other day where a certain quotation in one of my articles came from. This was the quotation:

As the marsh-hen secretly builds on the watery sod,
Behold I will build me a nest on the greatness of God:
I will fly in the greatness of God as the marsh-hen flies
In the freedom that fills all the space 'twixt the marsh
and the skies:
By so many roots as the marsh-grass sends in the sod
I will heartily lay me a-hold on the greatness of God:
Oh, like to the greatness of God is the greatness within
The range of the marshes, the liberal marshes of Glynn.

It made me proud and happy thus to have an opportunity of introducing another reader to the poetry of Sidney Lanier. Seven years ago Messrs. Gay & Bird published an edition of his poems in this country, yet he remains virtually unknown—and hundreds of poetry lovers are the poorer for it. I had been fortunate enough to know him two or three years before, through an article by Mr. Stedman in an American magazine. Some of the

extracts then made had never forsaken my memory. With the publication of Messrs. Gay & Bird's edition I took the opportunity of knowing the whole poems; and two of my friends, not inglorious as poets themselves, will, I know, recall a night of poetical debauch—I mean a debauch of poetry!—in which I passed on my new-found treasure to them. They thought him no less wonderful than I did; and his strenuous, romantic, pitiful history moved them as it moved me. For Lanier fought a battle with death (technically, consumption) to which Keats's classic consumption was child's play. It is so easy to fight anything, even consumption, if you have nothing else to do; but if you have a home to keep going as well, and only a pen to keep it going with—well, you look upon John Keats as one of the sybarites of immortality. Fortunately, Lanier had a flute, too, and thereby hangs much of his history, as well as the explanation of his temperament and gift. Lanier was one of the few poets who have loved music as well as, if not more than, poetry; and the music in him had an interesting ancestry: it came all the way from one Jerome Lanier, a Huguenot refugee, a musical composer, at the court of Queen Elizabeth, and it was successively transmitted by Jerome's son Nicholas—who was "in high favour" as a musician with both James I. and Charles I.—

Nicholas's son Nicholas, apparently no less favoured by Charles II. "A portrait of the elder Nicholas Lanier, by his friend Van Dyck," I read in Mr. W. Hayes Ward's memorial introduction to Lanier's poems, "was sold with other pictures belonging to Charles I. after his execution." Thus, Lanier's flute originally came from that enchanted period of English music when Campion was making his *Books of Airs*. There can be few more romantic instances of the transmission of taste and faculty than this reincarnation of Stuart music in a boy born at Macon, in Georgia, February 3, 1842. As a child he learned to play, "without instruction," on every available instrument—"flute, organ, piano, violin, guitar, and banjo, especially devoting himself to the flute in deference to his father, who feared for him the powerful fascination of the violin." In fact, his relatives generally were more alarmed than happy about his music, as a man's relatives—very naturally—are at the appearance in him of a serious passion for any art. Besides, music used to induce in the young Lanier states of trance ecstasy which left him shaken and exhausted. That ecstasy, so feared by his friends, is, we shall see, the very quality of highest value in his poetry. But that all this artistic sensibility meant no lack of manly fibre the war between North and South was soon to prove. At the age of nineteen he was drafted—

not forgetting his flute—into the Second Georgia Battalion of the Confederate Army, and with that army he was to remain, seeing much active service, and no little distinguishing himself for four years. Among other things he was a blockade-runner. His blockade-running resulted in five months' imprisonment in Point Lookout, from which he was released in February, 1865, to do a long tramp home to Georgia. It was the strain of this that gave his apparently hereditary consumption its opportunity; and henceforth, till his death at the age of thirty-nine, his life was to be a long fight with death—a fight carried on with a heroism which, in one or two instances, appears almost excessive, and from which, one cannot help feeling, that he might have been spared by friends who helped him now and then so much, that it seems as though they should have helped him more. He gained his livelihood during this time partly by writing and lecturing, and partly by his flute. He was "the first flute" in the Peabody Concerts at Baltimore, and his director has written of him as something like a great performer. Only nine months before his death we read that "when too feeble to raise his food to his mouth, with a fever temperature of 104 degrees," he pencilled his finest poem, called "Sunrise." Such, indeed, is what Mr. William Watson calls "the imperative breath of song."

All this, then, and how much more, lay behind the quotation which took my friend's fancy. That quotation is from an all-too-curtailed series of "Hymns of the Marshes," which Lanier had intended to make one big, ambitious poem. There are four "hymns" in all, but only two are of real importance, namely, "Sunrise" and the "Marshes of Glynn." In fact, had he written all his other poems, and missed writing these (striking, suggestive, and fine-lined as those other poems often are), he could hardly have been said to succeed in his high poetic ambition—as by these two poems I think he must be allowed to succeed. In the other poems you see many of the qualities, perhaps all the qualities, which strike you in the "Hymns"—the impassioned observation of nature, the Donne-like "metaphysical" fancy, the religious and somewhat mystic elevation of feeling, expressed often in terms of a deep imaginative understanding of modern scientific conceptions; in fact, you find all save the important quality of that ecstasy which in the "Hymns" fuses all into one splendid flame of adoration upon the altar of the visible universe. The ecstasy of modern man as he stands and beholds the sunrise or the coming of the stars, or any such superb, elemental glory, has, perhaps, never been more keenly translated into verse. Those who heard Lanier play remarked upon "the strange violin effects which

he conquered from the flute." Is it fanciful to feel that in these long, sweeping, and heart-breakingly sensitive lines, Lanier equally cheated his father, who, we have seen, "feared for him the fascination of the violin"? I shall need a long quotation, and even that may, properly, be inadequate to illustrate what I mean. Lanier is often exquisite and lovingly learned in detail; but his verse is large in movement and needs room.

The tide's at full: the marsh with flooded streams
Glimmers, a limpid labyrinth of dreams.
Each winding creek in grave entrancement lies,
A rhapsody of morning-stars. The skies
Shine scant with one forked galaxy,—
The marsh brags ten: looped on his breast they lie.

Oh, what if a sound should be made!
Oh, what if a bound should be laid
To this bow-and-string tension of beauty and silence
    a-spring,—
To the bend of beauty the bow, or the hold of silence
    the string!
I fear me, I fear me yon dome of diaphanous gleam
Will break as a bubble o'erblown in a dream,—
Yon dome of too-tenuous tissues of space and of night,
Overweighted with stars, overfreighted with light,
Oversated with beauty and silence, will seem
But a bubble that broke in a dream,
If a bound of degree to this grace be laid,
Or a sound or a motion made.

But no: it is made: list! somewhere,—mystery, where?
In the leaves? in the air?
In my heart? is a motion made:
'Tis a motion of dawn, like a flicker of shade on shade.
In the leaves 'tis palpable: low multitudinous stirring
Upward through the woods; the little ones, softly conferring,
Have settled my lord's to be looked for so; they are still;
But the air and my heart and the earth are a-thrill,—
And look where the wild duck sails round the bend of the river,—
And look where a passionate shiver
Expectant is bending the blades
Of the marsh-grass in serial shimmers and shades,—
And invisible wings, fast fleeting, fast fleeting,
Are beating
The dark overhead as my heart beats,—and steady and free
Is the ebb-tide flowing from marsh to sea—
(Run home, little streams,
With your lapfuls of stars and dreams),—
And a sailor unseen is hoisting a-peak,

For list, down the inshore curve of the creek
How merrily flutters the sail,—
And lo! in the East! Will the East unveil?
The East is unveiled, the East hath confessed
A flush: 'tis alive: 'tis dead, ere the West
Was aware of it: nay, 'tis abiding, 'tis unwithdrawn:
Have a care, sweet Heaven! 'Tis Dawn.

I think this bears out what I have said—more than I have said. Anyone who pleases may find

little literary faults. Even I could do that. But if only I could praise it as it deserves! Those who should imagine that Lanier wrote in this apparently "loose" Atlantic-roller metre from metrical ignorance are, of course, very much mistaken. On the contrary, he was a very learned metrist, as those who have grappled with his book on *The Science of English Verse* will know. In that book the inherited music in him came out once more as theory, his contention being that metrical law must be based on musical law. Personally, I have no opinion on the subject; and, however valuable in its province Lanier's treatise may be, I can only wish he had spent the precious six weeks it took to write it (only six weeks for over three hundred closely-written pages—consumption, too!) in writing another of his "Hymns of the Marshes."

I wonder whom these learned treatises on metre benefit. Not the poets, I am thinking. I imagine that Mr. Stephen Phillips would have written as good blank verse, though Mr. Robert Bridges's treatise on Miltonic blank verse had never seen that dim light of publicity vouchsafed to technical masterpieces. It is to be feared that poetry comes by nature—and there is no poetry without a musical ear—and that all the metrical training a poet needs is birched into him at school. Indeed, I think most poets take lessons in metre after they are famous;

for fear of awkward questions. The only training in metre a poet needs is the reading of great poets; not anatomically, but just—naturally. The study of metre is the study of skeletons. The study of skeletons never yet helped a man to dance.